Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Destruction of the Final World Religion, Part 4
Scripture: Revelation 17:9-18
Code: 66-62

Well I have much on my heart to say to you tonight and I want you to turn in your Bible right away to Revelation chapter 17 as we consider part four in our study of this chapter under the title, "The Destruction of the Final Form of False Religion."

As we have been learning throughout this great prophetic chapter, there will be a final formation of a one-world religion that will mark the end of man's day, just before the return of Jesus Christ. It will be Satan's final attempt to capture the minds and the souls of men, thwart the coming of Christ, prevent Him from setting up His earthly kingdom. If we learn anything from Revelation 17, we learn that the world is headed toward one-world religion. All the diverse ideologies will come together into one.

That one-world religion is given a name in verse 5, and we have noted it before, I will briefly review. The name is, "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." That name is very significant. The term "mystery" because it is deep, demonic, super-human and hidden as of now. The name "Babylon the great" because it was Babel that was the source of all false religion, when the people at the Tower of Babel who invented false religion were scattered and their languages changed. They carried their false religious systems all over the world. The source of all false religion, the mother of harlotries and the mother of all abominations of the earth was none other than Babel, it all started in one place and all those harlot children will come home in the end. It will come back to a final Babylon the great, a final world religion and it will be the same form of religion that mothered all the harlotries and all the abominations of religion the world over.

What this means is that the world is going to become increasingly religious. When the three presidents of the churches from the former Soviet Union were with us last week, the president of the church in the Ukraine, the church in Russia and the church in Byelorussia(?), I asked them all, "What is the future in your countries? What is the future behind the former Iron Curtain? What is the future in the former Soviet Union and the Communist block world? Where is it going?" Immediately one of them said to me, and the others agreed, "We will never go back to atheism. The people will never return to atheism. Some form of socialism, perhaps, atheism never." And they agreed that the future is religious.

Indeed they are correct. The force that will unite the world will be a religious force, a satanic deception of global proportions. The same kind of satanic deception that we noted back in chapter 16

verses 13 to 16 that gathers all the nations of the world to Armageddon to be slaughtered by the returning Christ. There doesn't seem to be any rational reason for why the great hordes of the world, the great armies and empires of the world would all come to the land of Israel except that they are deceived by Satan and they're all drawn there to be slaughtered by Christ.

It doesn't seem to make any sense either that all the religions of the world which now war against each other would all come together in one final common form of worship. But the devil who will operate always disguised as an angel of light will lure the world to a common altar, to a common form of religion through the power of his deception, the force of his demons and one great human being by the title of the false prophet. One world religion will come, it will coexist with a global world government, controlled by Antichrist.

There's an interesting book, if you want to read further on this, written by Dave Hunt, the title of it is Global Peace. And in that book he writes about this coming together of world religions into one. And he sees at the center of it, and I think rightly so, the Roman Catholic Church. You will remember that in this chapter down in verse 9, we'll get there in a moment, it talks about seven mountains on which the woman sits.

One of the most famous, one of the most well-known and celebrated Catholic monks is a man by the name of Thomas Merton who is a mystic. He told an ecumenical gathering of representatives from numerous religions in Calcutta, and I quote, "My dear brothers, we are already one but we imagine that we are not. And what we have to discover is our original unity." Quite an interesting statement. A man by the way who is read by Catholics, who is read by Protestants and often hailed, who's ready by other mystics, including Buddhists. Merton was echoing not only Mother Teresa's same sentiments, but he was echoing what the Popes have been saying, and particularly what the present Pope is saying.

For example, three Catholic priests state in their book which bears the official imprimatur, I quote, "We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the aged-old wisdom of the east and capture it for Christ. Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM, and similar practices," end quote. Rome, in some ways, approves of mixing Hinduism and Buddhism with its Catholicism. Catholicism already being a mixture of paganism and Christianity.

Cardinal Ratzinger(?) who is the Vatican Guardian of Catholic Orthodoxy, issued a twenty-three page letter in mid December of 1989 to three thousand Roman Catholic Bishops expressing some concern about what is going on with Catholics involved in TM, Zen, Yoga, and eastern mysticism. His statement, however, approved by Pope John Paul II, did not condemn eastern mysticism or New Age meditation, or Yoga techniques, but in fact it suggested taking from them what is useful. The plea was just to maintain Catholicism.

John Paul II has publicly encouraged such a syncretistic attitude. At the universities of Calcutta and New Delhi in his 1986 visit to India, he told huge Hindu audiences, and I quote, "India's mission is crucial because of her intuition of the spiritual nature of man. Indeed, India's greatest contribution to the world can be to offer it a spiritual vision of man. And the world does well to attend willingly to this ancient wisdom, and in it to find enrichment for human living," end quote. The Catholic Pope hailing Hinduism.

It's an incredible thing. It goes on all the time frequently. And they're all reaching back to the roots of religion in eastern mysticism which really goes back to Babylon. Thomas Merton wrote, and I quote, "Buddhism and Christianity are alike in making use of ordinary every day human existence as a material for a radical transformation of consciousness," end quote.

Merton taught that the transformation of consciousness which Zen Buddhism calls the great death is identical to what Christians call the dying and rising with Christ. That both, he said, lead to the death of self and a new life, not found in some future paradise but in living here and now.

Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI joined such notables as the Dalai Lama, Anwart Sadat, who is a Muslim, and the U.N. Secretary General Uthant(?), who is a Buddhist, to form what is called "The Temple of Understanding," known as the United Nations of World Religion. Its director of international programs is Louis Dallon(?) a Catholic priest, Catholic Archbishop Angelo Fernandez was for its first eight years the president of the Geneva based World Conference on Religion and Peace, organized to bring together a growing network involving all the major religions of the world.

His holiness, Dalai Lama, who is God to most Tibetan Buddhists has been well received by Roman Catholic leaders around the world. He met twice with Pope Paul VI and has met five or more times with his good friend, John Paul II, the current Pope. Says the Dalai Lama, "Both of us have the same aim." It's really an incredible thing.

This kind of thing goes on and on. There are numerous illustrations of it. Another Catholic leader who has been a major promoter of global religious unity was Augustine Cardinal Bee(?) who is a Jesuit and for nineteen years rector of Rome's Pontifical Biblical College. Cardinal Bee annually hosted Agapes of Brotherhood which were attended by hundreds of international guests, Buddhists, Muslims, Shintoists and everything in between. The Cardinal in one of his speeches, quote, "Stressed the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God which...he said...embraces all men." And so it goes.

There is a worldwide effort, and as I said, Rome is very highly involved in this with that and its Interfaith Councils of which there are seventy of them, pulling everybody together as much as possible, trying to find a globally interconnected ecumenical movement. That's exactly what's going

to happen. And the only way it can really ultimately be pulled off is to erase dogma as an issue, go back to a mystical kind of experience and all of that has to be orchestrated by satanic deception.

Ask yourself, for example, how the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland are ever going to get along, or how the atheists in North Korea and the quote/unquote Christians of South Korea are going to ever get along, or how the people in Bosnia and Croatia who are an amalgam of all kinds of people thrown together, the main divergence being deeply held religious convictions, are ever going to get together? Ask yourself how the Middle East is ever going to get together, Jew and Gentile even, Arabic world and all the rest? Ask yourself how Pakistan will ever be united in its battles and its wars over religion and you might say it's all hopeless, it can never happen...but it will happen.

The Antichrist will come riding on a white horse, first of all, in the first seal that opens in chapter 6, and he will conquer the world and the world will be pulled together economically. And right on the heels of that will be a great religious revival and orchestrated by Satan it will begin to pull the world religions together into one. That is the agenda, as I said, of Pope John Paul II, that aggressive ecumenical union of all religions across the globe and that will be the plan of Satan and he will pull it off.

This is the final form of world religion. Now this world religion is called a harlot because it is not the true bride of Christ, it is not the true church, it is not truly the wife of God, but rather a prostitution. And we come to chapter 17, the first thing we see in the first six verses is the exposure of the harlot. We've already gone over that. She is exposed as a deadly, ugly prostitute and all who get in her bed will catch a terminal illness. In verses 1 to 6 we saw the exposure of the harlot.

Then starting in verse 7 we began to look at the explanation of the harlot. Verse 7 introduced that explanation. "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 starting there in verse 8 is a description.

Now in our last discussion we started by looking at the harlot, first of all. The harlot is described in this chapter and so is the beast that she rides on. Remember back earlier in the book...in the chapter rather, it pictures her in verse 3 sitting on a scarlet beast, and that is the Antichrist. So the religious system rides on the Antichrist. The Antichrist and his governmental system of the world support the false religious system. They coexist for a while.

Now to fully understand the explanation, we have to look both at the beast and the harlot. We looked at the harlot last time. Remember in verse 18, it says, "The woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." This further extends and expands the harlot, not only a world religious system, but it is identified with an actual city, a real city, the city of Babylon. Not only ancient Babylon, but a rebuilt Babylon which will be likely the capital of Antichrist's empire. We

discussed that.

Verse 15 further describes the harlot city which is alongside waters, waters where the harlot sits which represent peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues. So the final form of world religion will find a location in the world in a revived and restored Babylon. The system itself will become a place where the world traffics, all the various nations and multitudes and peoples and tongues of the nation will traffic in this final form of world religion which is associated, as I also noted for you, with a system that is economic, which will be described in chapter 18.

So the harlot is exposed for what she is, a harlot in verses 1 to 6. And for who she is here in verses 18 and 15. She is a false religious system, identified with the final world government of the Antichrist. Seated somehow in a rebuilt Babylon, also having links to the city of Rome and the Roman system. And she is trafficked by the whole world, as verse 15 indicates.

Now, let's look at the beast who is the second figure here in this chapter. And to fully understand the explanation of the harlot, you have to understand the relationship of the system to the beast that carries her. Back in verse 3 the beast is introduced with that word therion, wild beast. And here we find a description of the beast which starts in verse 8.

Now the beast, by the way, has been introduced to us back in chapter 11 verse 7, back in chapter 13 verse 1, it's a description of the term...of the person who is called Antichrist.

Let's look at verse 8. And as we see the beast, we'll begin to see the relationship the beast has to the harlot and how that all works out. "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 names have 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."

Now just briefly let me remind you of what we studied with regard to this. "The beast that you saw" refers to the Antichrist. John saw him back in verse 3. He also had a vision of him in 13 and 11, as I noted. And the beast which he saw is this man with tremendous human genius and human ingenuity, and power, brilliance, leadership that captures the whole world. He is the one riding on the white horse in chapter 6, who comes and conquers. He conquers the world.

Daniel speaks of him, so does Jesus, so does Paul, so does John in his epistle. But Daniel speaks of him as an intellectual genius, as an outstanding orator. He speaks of him as a master politician, a commercial wizard, a military mastermind, a man of unequalled power and a religiously oriented man...a royal blasphemer. He's the most incredible leader ever. He is a hundred Napoleons, he is a thousand Hitlers, as we said. He is Satan's supreme human instrument, to destroy Israel, prevent the salvation of Israel, prevent the kingdom, kill believers, conquer the world for Satan and defeat Christ.

Quite a task, quite a man.

Notice in verse 8 it says, "He was, and is not, and is about to come." And that reminds us of the fake resurrection that he supposedly pulls off back in chapter 13, it is described. He exists. He's doing fine. And then it appears that he dies. And he comes back to life. And that fabricated resurrection pulled off literally convinces the whole world that he is the great leader, that he is not only to be followed but he is to be worshiped. And it says that he comes up out of the abyss. And that reminds us that at some point in time this man will literally be indwelt by a demon from the abyss. He'll conquer the world by his power and certainly he'll be energized in some ways by Satan, but at some point, probably at the point that he has a fake resurrection, he will be energized from hell...a great powerful demon source within him will then allow him to begin to do things that are really astounding.

Chapter 17 and chapter 13 both talk about the supposed resurrection. Chapter 13 tells us that it amazes the whole world and the whole world starts to worship him.

Now when you see this beast here, it refers both to the man and his kingdom because they're inseparable. They're absolutely inseparable. It says in verse 8, the people on the earth begin to wonder, that is all of those whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, that is other than those who are saved, those who were chosen, and those whose names were written before the world began, as is true of all the elect. Other than believers, the whole world will go after him. And what causes them to do it? When they see that he was, and is not and will come. When they see him rise again and come back into power after supposedly dying. He rises then as a world ruler, empowered from hell. And then he really begins to reign.

What is his end? The middle of the verse says he will go to destruction, perdition. It means eternal damnation. But for a while, for a while he's going to have some power in the world. I believe that the first half of the seven-year period called the Tribulation he probably, or nearly the first half, he...somewhere into the first half, toward the middle, he's still reigning and ruling in his natural human ability, maybe enhanced somewhat by Satan and demons. But somewhere around the middle he gets infused with satanic power, he goes in, abominates the temple which happens at the midpoint, then he becomes the only one that anybody could worship. And he establishes the world religion of the worship of Antichrist. So the coexisting world religion has to be before that time, as he takes power early in the seven years politically, I believe the false religious system starts early, and they coexist till the midpoint when he demands that the whole world worship him. Chapter 13 says the false prophet builds an idol and the whole world turns their worship away from the prior form of world religion and worships the Antichrist. And that's when he becomes the final form of world religion.

So verse 8 gives us a little insight into this incredible individual. Now let's move on from there and pick it up where we left off in verse 9. "Here is the mind which has wisdom, the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits." I want you to listen very carefully, and I'll do the best I

can to make this clear. When it says "here is the mind which has wisdom," that's just one way of saying, here is an invitation to a closer inspection. We want you to look more deeply into this. It's a very unusual phrase, by the way, and it introduces to us a very difficult and a very complex aspect of this vision. And it's there to tell you you're not going to get this the first time through. You're going to have to look a little deeply into this. And only those with spiritual minds and spiritual wisdom are going to understand the revelation that is about to follow. And maybe, and just maybe only those who are alive at that time are really going to be able to understand it.

And what is it that we have to understand? That the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. Now go back for a moment to verse 3, this beast full of blasphemous names, is depicted as having seven heads and ten horns...seven heads and ten horns. What does that mean? Well let's look more closely and find out. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. The word "mountain" is orae(?), it doesn't necessarily mean a high mountain, a lofty mountain, it can mean a hill, it can mean a small mountain. For example, Matthew 5:1, Matthew 15:29, John 6:15 would use it to indicate a small hill. Many people associate this with Rome, the city built on seven hills. And it is well, I think, for us to remember that the system called Babylon, the false religious system that exists in the first half of the Tribulation time, is going to be linked to Rome. And I think there is an allusion here to the seven heads being seven hills. Throughout the history of the city of Rome it has been described as a city of seven hills which rise from the banks of the famous Tiber River. This is on the Roman coinage throughout the centuries. It's in the Roman literature. It's in their prose, it's in their poetry. Victorenious(??) was the first to write a commentary on Revelation, the first in history to write a commentary on Revelation, and he applied this verse to Rome.

So I'm reluctant not to see something of Rome as a main feature in this interpretation. But it can't just be that. Otherwise it wouldn't have to say, "Here is the mind which has wisdom," because it would be obvious. There's got to be something deeper. Something more than just Rome because this false religious system is worldwide. And he says that there is something more, verse 10, look at it. "And they are seven kings."

Now we have to go through the reference to Rome if indeed there is a reference to Rome, and we can assume that perhaps there is without being dogmatic. But we have to go through that reference now and find something else, and what do we find? Seven kings. The beast is vastly more than one city. His great empire covers more than one city. The false world religious system will be involved with more than one city. In fact, it will be a world empire. The call for spiritual discernment means there's got to be something more than just a geographical reference to a city with seven hills or we wouldn't need spiritual wisdom, we need some spiritual wisdom here.

What are we talking about? Well there are seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come. And when he comes he must remain a little while. What are these? What does this mean?

Listen and I'll try to give it to you as simply as I can. The heads are on the beast, would you notice that? Not on the political...not on the harlot, not on the religious system. The religious system is one world unified religion. But the heads are on the beast and the beast is the political figure, not the religious one. So we can't overdo the matter of Rome as the seat of religious power. But Rome is even now also powerful politically and economically. So as I said, Rome may be reference there, not for its religious component because the seven heads are on the beast, not the harlot. But still there could be some reference made there to Rome...as I said, we can't be dogmatic.

But the primary issue here is that the mountains represent kings. This, by the way, was common in the Old Testament, for mountains or for hills to represent a symbol of power or a symbol of rule. I don't want to go over all of that, but you can find that in the Old Testament a number of places, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and the Psalms, Zechariah, Habakkuk. So the mountains here represent seven empires...seven kings inseparable from their kingdoms. Who are they?

Well, five are fallen. If we go back to Daniel chapter 2 we find out about who the kingdoms are, we at least get some insight into it. The image of Daniel in chapter 2 of Daniel, verses 37 to 39 provides this. Daniel's image pictured four kingdoms; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Okay? Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Remember that great image? And the head was gold and then the upper part was silver, and then bronze was the mid-section, and then steel or iron and iron and clay mixed...the descending weakness is depicted in the changing metals. But those were the great four world empires; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Prior to those there were two great world empires, Egypt and Assyria...Egypt and Assyria. At the time John writes, Rome is still a great world power. So going way back to the beginning of history, in the biblical frame of reference we have Egypt, Assyria, that's one and two, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, that takes us up to six. As John writes, five are fallen. Five have gone out of existence. What are they? Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece...and as John writes, there is one still in existence, what is it? Rome. In fact, John is in exile by the Roman government to the island of Patmos.

Now let me just help you to understand something. Henry Morris writes, and I think it's very important to listen, "Though none of these empires ever actually ruled the whole globe, each was the greatest kingdom of its time, particularly in reference to the land and the people of Israel and these kingdoms' opposition to the proclamation of God's Word and the accomplishment of His purposes in the world. These, of course, have not been the only kingdoms that have been with enmity with God and His purposes. In this category could also be placed such kingdoms as Syria, Edom, Moab, Median and many others. But none of these were empires of great size and influence. On the other hand...he writes...there were other great and powerful empires in the ancient world, China, India and the Incas for example, but these had only peripheral contact with the Word of God and the chosen people. There were only six kingdoms that met both criteria up to the time of Christ and the Apostles. Furthermore, all six of these were not only legitimate heirs of political Babel, but also of religious

Babel as well. Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome were all strongholds of the world religion of evolutionary pantheism and idolatrous polytheism. Thus they appropriately are represented as six heads on the great beast that supports the harlot."

And so we learn the five that are fallen. Again, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. Then says the angel, "One is," that is Rome. Then he says, "The other has not yet come." What is that? That is the future kingdom of Satan and Antichrist, the future great world kingdom. And when he comes, and the beast again is synonymous...or the king, I should say, is synonymous with his kingdom, in this case it's the beast, the Antichrist. When he comes he must remain a little while. All that says is it's a brief time. He will have his kingdom, but it will be for a brief time. In fact, in chapter 12 verse 12, "Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time." Chapter 13 and verse 5 says, "It will be forty-two months in which he will blaspheme the name of God and His tabernacle." And that, of course, is the second half of the time of Tribulation, where he speaks arrogant words against God, blaspheme God...blasphemes God and demands that the whole world worship him.

So, follow...seven hills represent seven kings, five are fallen, one is Rome, one is yet to come which anticipates the final empire of Antichrist. But then look at an interesting note in verse 11. This is really interesting. "And the beast which was and is not is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven and he goes to destruction."

Now you've got to put on your thinking cap a little bit. What this says is that the seventh is the kingdom to come, the kingdom of Antichrist in the future, but not only is it the seventh but it is also the eighth. How could it be the seventh and then be the eighth? We already know, don't we? What's going to happen to the Antichrist? He's going to appear to die and rise again, so he is both one of the seven, and himself also the eighth. This then looks at the last and final phase of Antichrist's rule after his supposed demise and resurrection, after he destroys every form of religion and demands the whole world to worship him, as we saw in chapter 13. You see, for the first half again he will coexist with the harlot, we'll see more about that in a minute. And then he will demand that the harlot be destroyed and the whole world worship him. And then he will be the final world empire.

"And he goes to destruction." That, by the way, is the theme of the chapter. His destruction, and that's exactly where he's going. He is called in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "The man of lawlessness and the son of destruction...the son of destruction." He is not going to fall like the first five. He is not going to fall like Rome. He is going to be destroyed by God.

Further explanation is given in verse 12. We saw seven heads on this beast, which represent the seven kingdoms up until the final form and then the eighth is referenced in verse 11. He also, this beast also, according to verse 3, had ten horns which he says you saw are ten kings. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings. Again that imagery is back in chapter 12 verse 3, back in chapter 13

verse 1. What does this mean? This is ten simultaneous kings.

Now listen, the final kingdom is the seventh and then the eighth. But it is composed of ten component parts. The ten horns...horn being an indication of power and authority, represents just that. In the final kingdom of Antichrist, the ten horns refer to ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom. During the time of Antichrist's reign there will be ten kings that help him rule the globe. Interestingly enough there are some articles in print that talk about dividing the world into ten zones for ease of ruling. Interesting.

Daniel describes the image, remember, as having ten toes. And so, perhaps in the final form of the Antichrist's rule he's going to divide the world into ten zones and he's going to give certain men authority to rule on his behalf in those zones. In some way they will be a part of the federation with the Antichrist. They haven't received a kingdom yet, that's because Antichrist hasn't taken over and apportioned out the world and assigned them to their responsibility.

But they receive authority, look at it in verse 12, as kings with the beast for one hour. Again that just emphasizes the brevity of it. Now they'll be devoted to the beast. Look at verse 13, "They have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast." So it makes sense that the Antichrist is going to take control of the world, divide it up, put people in there who are sort of like sub-kings, who answer to him, who serve his purpose, and give all their power and authority to him. They do his will and they do his will alone. He is God to them. And what is his purpose? To destroy Christ, to destroy Christians, to destroy Israel, to prevent the Kingdom, verse 14 says that, "These will wage war against the Lamb." That's what they're going to do. That's their agenda and that's their purpose.

When are they going to do that? Go back to chapter 16. Chapter 16 verse 14, "Demons performing signs in an incredible deception go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." And verse 16, "They gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har Magedon." That is where the final war against God is going to be fought.

So, just briefly, let me review ever so quickly. The seven-year period of Tribulation begins just after the catching away of the church. The Antichrist rides in, as it were, on a white horse, conquering, he has a bow but no arrows, it's a peaceful kind of conquering. He brings the world a false peace, he takes over the world. At the same time a false religious world, global form of religion and worship grows up and the two exist...the harlot, the religion riding along supported by the beast. Then at the midpoint the beast doesn't tolerate that anymore, as we shall see. Consumes the false religious system and demands that the whole world worship him. He then becomes the world leader, not only politically but spiritually, already have apportioned out the world into ten zones, he has his sub-kings ruling on his behalf. His power at the first part of the Tribulation was the seventh great world power in the prophetic order. And after his false resurrection, he becomes also the eighth form. And that's

where we are at this particular point.

However, this is an ill-fated battle. Verse 14, "These will wage war against the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them." Now if you want to read about that, you can go to chapter 20 but...I mean, chapter 19, but don't do it cause we'll get to that, don't read the end yet. 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 and faithful. The Lamb will overcome them. t hat is the repeated theme of the book of Revelation, that the Lamb will be unveiled, the Lamb will be revealed, the Lamb will triumph. Back in chapter 6 verse 16, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Chapter 16 and verse 17, "The wrath of the Lamb comes again and there is lightning and there is an earthquake like never in the history of the world. Every island flees, every mountain has gone flat, huge hailstones, men blaspheming God because of the plague. The wrath of the Lamb."

Chapter 19 verses 17 to 21 describe the tremendous holocaust of the Lamb's wrath, a massacre that is just beyond description. Now the reason that all the forces of hell, all the demons and all the powers of evil men cannot defeat the Lamb is given right there. What does it say? "Because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings." He is the supreme one. Chapter 19 verse 16, "On His robe, on His thigh He has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords." By the way, that title is a divine title for God that goes back to Deuteronomy 10:17, and the angel adds a marvelous note, what does the angel say? I love this, "And those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

It can't be angels. It can't be angels. Angels are chosen. Yes. But not called and don't operate by faith. They operate by sight. It can't be the angels. It has to be the saints. It has to be believers who are also described when Christ returns, and I'm going to have let you see a little of it, because when He comes, verse 14 says, "The armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, are following Him on white horses." The saints, the redeemed, the glorified church. The only ones who are called, chosen and faithful are saints, believers. That, by the way, is a great salvation text. It starts with election in eternity past, comes to the calling and to faith which saves. Angels will be there also, Matthew 24:30 and 31 says He's coming back with His angels. Second Thessalonians 1:7 says He comes in fiery judgment with His angels. They'll be there, but so will the saints.

So it's an ill-fated war. He may have an empire that is greater than Egypt, and Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. In fact, he may have an empire that is the embodiment of all the strengths of all those prior empires. He may have control of the whole of the world and he may have apportioned it out to ten very strong kings who do his bidding. He may have a great purpose. He may have Satan on his side deceiving all the armies of the world and collecting them into Armageddon. It will be the greatest force ever amassed against God. But they will be destroyed...they will be destroyed.

And that takes us to the last point in this chapter, the extermination of the harlot...the extermination of the harlot. There's two verses remaining that we haven't looked at, verses 16 and 17. Before we even get to the extermination of the beast, which we'll get to, we've already had the promise of destruction in this chapter, look at what the beast does to the harlot. Verse 16, "And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot."

At some point after he has gained control of the world, obviously, he wants the world to worship him. He wants to be God. That's the ultimate blasphemy. He doesn't want the world having any other religion than the worship of himself, so he hates the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire. You see, he can't stand the competition because the religion itself has great power. It has seductive control over the people of the world. And if you don't think that religion is a greater a power than politics, then ask yourself why all the politicians on the face of the earth can't stop people from fighting each other over religious issues? They can't. It doesn't matter what they try, they never succeed. All the politicians are wracking their brain trying to do something about Croatia, Serbia, and all of that, and Bosnia, they can't do anything about it because there are more compelling issues on the religious level that go way back. They run deep.

Well the Antichrist will not be able to tolerate that. Also there's no doubt about it, religion becomes extremely wealthy. He wants the homage and he wants the wealth. And you know as well as I do that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, that's what Jesus said Himself. And Satan is finally going to wake up and realize that he can't do this thing to defeat Christ, he has no chance at all unless he pulls this division together. So he does. And he makes her desolate. That is, I believe, he robs the system of its wealth, its treasure, its power. Leaves her absolutely naked, he strips the system bare. Takes it all. The religious system of the world is left with nothing. And by the way, the False Prophet cooperates in this and moves over...this False Prophet isn't dumb, he wants a job and so the job left is to be the one who points to the beast.

"He eats her flesh." What does that mean? Everything is gone. Everything is consumed. There's not a vestige of the former false religious system left on the face of the earth. He is the new God, the new king, the new ruler, the new idol. There's nothing left. And even what may be the residue, the bones, if you will, of the consumed harlot are burned with fire.

And why in the world would he do that? Verse 17, "For God has put it in their hearts to execute his purpose, by having a common purpose and by giving their kingdom to their beast until the words of God should be fulfilled." Guess who's directing the whole deal? God, from start to finish, to execute His purpose by having a common purpose. God wants this whole one-world empire, God wants it just the way Satan is taking it so that God in one great act can destroy it all.

May I just throw a footnote in here? One good reason not to meddle with Satan, he might be doing God's will. He wants these kings to give their kingdom to the beast. He wants the cup of iniquity to be full. He wants the war with the Lamb. Why? Because He wants to totally destroy all wickedness on the earth, bring them on. "Until the words of God shall be fulfilled." All the prophecies of judgment, all the prophecies of Christ's return and the establishment of the kingdom are to be fulfilled. The mysteries of God are to be finished. And that's the way it's going.

And so, chapter 17 gives us a picture of the final destruction of the final form of false religion. All that's left now is the beast and his world empire which Christ will destroy. To better understand the beast and his empire, we have to go through chapter 18 and that's another trek of monumental proportions for another Sunday.

Father, we come to You now at the close of this evening, grateful that You have demonstrated Your faithfulness to us. We have no fear regarding these matters because our confidence is in Christ. We're not looking for the Antichrist, we're looking for Christ. Somebody said, we're not looking for the undertaker, we're looking for the upper taker. We're not living in mortal fear of what is going to come upon the earth, we're living in joyous anticipation of what awaits us in heaven. We're not anticipating the wrath to come, we're going to be delivered from the wrath to come. We're not looking for the hour of trial, we're rather are to escape the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world.

Lord, we thank You that because of Jesus Christ we shall be delivered from terrifying things and taken into Your presence. We thank You that all we have in our hearts is joyous hope that You've gone to prepare a place for us, and if You've gone to prepare a place for us, You will come again to receive us unto Yourself that where You are, there we may be also. We await that great day and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and fellowship with You. And then that day when we return with You as the chosen and the called and the faithful, not here on earth will we wait for You, but we will come with You, having already been taken to glory. What a wonderful promise. And in that anticipation we serve with our whole hearts, in Christ's name. Amen.

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