

Rev 26-05-17a

Today is the 17th of May, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation. We are looking at Babylon as the capital city of Satan.

We want to understand its characteristics. We want to recognize its ploys and its temptations and its persuasive, subversive, and deceptive tactics so that we are not taken in and led astray and lose our inheritance in the new Jerusalem, the capital city of God and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study.

We'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for this time of fellowship. We thank you for the privilege of praying for one another, of celebrating answered prayer and deliverances and the onward progress of your plan as we see it unfold in our individual lives.

We thank you for the opportunity we have to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation so that those in our periphery may question the hope that is in us and give us an opportunity to share the wonderful gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the tremendous blessing that he is in our lives, the provision and potential in the present and the wonderful hope of the future that we have in him. We pray that our study this morning will enliven those truths in our souls, help us to remember who we are and why we're here, help us to see clearly in the light of your word, our circumstances, those things that pull us in bad directions, to identify them, turn from them and pass away. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

It is a good opportunity here to review where we are in the book of Revelation. We are looking at chapter 17 and chapter 18 together because together they give us this relationship of the beast and the woman. It is so easy to begin to speculate about the seven heads and the 10 horns or to endeavor to interpret them.

Although scripture itself tells us, the angel tells John that the seven heads are kingdoms, five have fallen, one now is, and there's one yet to come. And then you have the 10 horns, kings that have not yet received a kingdom. And they are going to rule one hour with the beast.

So we know these 10 kings are a confederation of powerful individuals who do not lead governments. They are kings without a kingdom. They are powerful, but what they rule and the way they leverage their power is not a formal government system.

This might've been difficult to imagine in earlier days, but when you look today at the moguls, there was recently a trip to China on the part of the leaders in our government and a number of very prominent businessmen who are powerful. You might consider them to be kings or rulers in their fields of endeavor, whether it is technology or industry, commerce, trade. And these individuals went seeking to broker deals, to use their power and their leverage to gain access to markets and so on.

I believe that this is going to be the nature of the power of the 10 kings. They will see an advantage in unseating the woman who has sat astride the beast for millennia. Interestingly, if you think about this beast, if you just step back and look at this whole presentation, we think about the heads and we say, well, you've got these empires.

Five have fallen and we enumerate them. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece. And then the sixth that now is in John's day is Rome.

The seventh is one that will come. And it starts out the 70th week. And then there is an interruption in the middle and there is an eighth that appears that is of the seven.

And it seems to incorporate aspects of all the previous ones, but it is something new. And this is called by the classical dispensational interpreters, such as Dr. Walvard, the revived Roman empire, because it partakes that Rome amalgamated and consolidated many of the earlier achievements of previous empires. And this one will do the same, but you have this element of seven heads and 10 horns, but they all connect to one beast.

They are manifestations. They are means of expressing the power, leveraging the intentions and the purposes of the beast. And the beast provides the directionality, the motility, the mobility, the presence of these heads and the horns that accompany them at that end time.

The horns have not appeared yet. No one knows exactly who they are. We can see their characteristics, but it's a single beast.

I would argue from the scene in Luke where the Lord Jesus is led into the wilderness for temptations, that this is Satan's presence on the earth. It isn't necessarily Satan himself, but it is his kingdom and it manifests itself in different ways. He is trying to establish his ability to rule apart from God, apart from God's presence, apart from God's power and apart from God's principles, apart from his righteousness and his justice.

We have an alternative, Satan says, and we can accomplish everything that you are purposing without you. Give me space, give me people, give me time. I will show that I am justified in desiring to raise my throne above the stars of God and be like the Most High.

Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, you see the intentions of Satan and God has given him space because as anybody that has raised children knows, just telling somebody what is true and what is right, what is safe, what is proper, doesn't always convince them. In many cases, and this is our relationship with our heavenly father, we have to learn hard lessons by experience and they stick a lot longer and they are remembered in many cases for a lifetime. Don't touch that, it's hot, you touch it anyway, you find out that your mother loves you and there's a reason she doesn't want you playing with a hot iron or sticking a fork in an electric socket or any one of a number of other things that we might think are interesting projects as children and we are warned against it, but we just don't think it's a problem.

We all believe we're nine feet tall and bulletproof. We soon learned that we're only about four and a half feet tall and slightly waterproof. So God has allowed human history to unfold with Satan as the God of this world.

Who made Satan the God of this world? Our God and father in heaven. Our God and father in heaven has given him this authority. He owns it, it belongs to him.

He could legitimately offer the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus if he would forsake the father's plan and throw in with Satan. This was a real temptation, it was a genuine opportunity to bypass the cross and it has been the choice writ large in the early career of the Lord Jesus, but it is the choice that all human beings make. Are we going to throw in with Satan or are we going to recognize the grace, the faithfulness, the love of God expressed toward us and respond to that? It is a binary choice.

It is either or, one or the other, there is no middle ground. If we accept God's grace and partake of that love and salvation and then fall away, we can suffer similarly as those who have made the choice for Satan from the outset. We are saved yet so as by fire, but there is great suffering.

There is great forfeiture and loss, both in this life and in the next, if we are seed that falls on thorny soil and the cares of this world occupy us, chokes the seed and it is unfruitful. The seed is the word. So binary choice, two visionary women in Revelation.

One is the woman crowned with 12 stars who gives birth to the child that we saw earlier. This is the alternative. There are two women.

There are two capital cities. There are two agendas. We do not want to in any way, shape or form drift toward Babylon.

It is a mystery. She is labeled a mystery, prominently so because she does not represent one single entity. The sitting on seven mountains has often been construed that John was talking about the Roman empire, the city on seven hills.

These are not hills, they are mountains, and they are also labeled as empires with kings and five have fallen. There have not been five mountains fall in Rome. So while Rome may fit the pattern, the woman does not represent the Roman empire.

She may include the operations of the Roman empire, but is by no means limited to her presence spans time. This is where it is really important because as we look at these characteristics of Babylon, they have existed ever since Cain went to live in the land of Nod, east of Eden. It has existed ever since alternative forms of government and control and persuasion and influence on others have existed.

Nimrod in the plain of Shinar, forward in time. Satan has established and has promoted and has

enabled and empowered human governments all over the world since the dawn of human history. That is the beast.

The prominent heads are these major empires that were memorable and written in the word of God for instruction, for observation, for interpretation, for application. We should learn something looking at Egypt, taking the people of God into slavery and then experiencing the judgment of God in his deliverance of his people. We should be informed with the Assyrian empire and its conquest of the Northern kingdom in 721 BC.

We should be informed with the Babylonian empire and its three incursions into Judah and Jerusalem in 605 and 598 and in 586. Daniel and his three friends, Ezekiel, and then into the return under the Medo-Persian empire, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, the post-exilic prophets that we have studied. These heads are empires.

They're recorded in the word of God so that we can study them and see their employment by God, even as they are ruled by Satan. God will put hooks in the jaws of Leviathan and steer him in the direction that he wants him to go. Remember this from the book of Job.

We look at the Roman empire in the time of Christ and the time of the apostles, and we anticipate what the new or revived empire that is going to prevail in the early days of the 70th week after we depart, what it's going to look like. So understanding these heads is important. What role does the woman play? I'm fascinated by this.

Isn't it a great thought experiment to imagine other ways that God could have communicated these truths? What if there had been, as in the visions you find in the book of Daniel, different beasts representing the empires? So you have the bear with one shoulder higher than another and ribs in its teeth, and you have the leopard and so on. Couldn't we have seven beasts here? It's a single beast because it represents the rule of Satan across history. Some have arisen and have fallen, five.

One now is the Roman empire. It is one of the heads, but it is not the beast, and it is not the woman. The woman can't be ahead of the beast and be the woman, both.

Rome cannot fulfill both roles in the same metaphorical presentation, in the same vision. Rome is one of the heads. It's not the woman.

So what does the woman represent? This is really fascinating because we know as we move forward, that this woman is going to become unseated. The beast is going to turn and tear her to pieces. The beast will still be there.

The horns, the 10 kings will still be there, and the woman is going to be destroyed. And as we will see, her destruction is profound. The vision shows us at the end of chapter 17, these kings are of one mind in verse 13.

They will give their power and authority to the beast. So these powerful individuals or entities, you can name, even as a non-technical person, several of the most powerful entities, influences on the earth. You think of those that fund media coverage.

I never get more frustrated than when I set up a new computer with Windows, and Microsoft Windows, by default, employs the Edge browser, and the Edge browser, by default, splashes your homepage with MSN News. It is a giant propaganda piece. They should just call it Pravda or something.

It is so twisted, left-leaning, filtered, and salacious. It wants you to go down bad roads. It says, oh, look at this beautiful picture.

Click this and find out where this country is. And when you start following clickbait, one thing you're not doing, it never leads you to church. It never leads you to the Bible.

It never leads you to a divine viewpoint on the past, the present, or the future. You turn on your phone and it says, don't you want to see where you were eight years ago? Don't you want to see what was going on a year ago and say, oh, here are the pictures you took, and it co-opts your mind. It takes you places you did not intend to go.

In many cases, those places are benign, probably in most cases. But the pattern of being led, of being suggestible, of having your original purpose co-opted, subverted, perverted, in some cases, is dangerous. It sets a dangerous precedent.

If you fire a weapon over and over and over again, you take it to the range and you put hundreds of rounds through it, you put thousands of rounds through it, the mechanism that controls the trigger pull and how quickly the firing pin is released becomes worn. In most weapons, this is called the sear, S-E-A-R. And as the sear becomes worn, the weapon fires more quickly, more easily, sometimes more surprisingly, and sometimes when you don't want it to.

But by habituation and by familiarization, we become inured to the draw and the pull, the innocuous repetition of this pattern. You think about the first time someone said a bad word on television. There was shock, there was boycotts, people turned their TV off, I will not watch that.

That network again, the first time they depicted a homosexual character and sort of played it for laughs and tried to get it in. The first time something happens, the first time there is a same gender kiss on TV, people are up in arms, it hits the paper, it's on the radio, talk shows, opinions. It has been repeated so many times.

Now, it doesn't even raise an eyebrow. We don't even blink. And it often happens that we just let it into our living rooms because, well, I'll put up with that because this other part is entertaining, it's funny, it's captivating.

So yes, there's a gay relationship depicted, but I will tolerate it. I am not saying that we have to turn off every single piece of entertainment that has a bad word or a bad concept. There's murders and drugs and all kinds of heinous things that are depicted, but we should not become apathetic and indifferent to what the world is sluicing into our lives through our phones, through our TVs and so on.

Watch and pray, be aware, spot it when it happens, take note, remember to reject it, remember to think about why it's wrong, why God forbids it, why God classifies it as an abomination, as we saw last time, and not become complacent, not become accepting and overly tolerant. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. In it, but not of it.

This is the seduction of the woman, because what has Satan done to manipulate and control the people who are ruled by governments? The Scarlet Harlot offers gratifications. Babylon has a lure that will enable people to put up with their government because what they get in return is worth it. You have your oppressive governments.

How do those governments continue and function? Because there are tens of thousands of bureaucrats who live in mansions and drive nice cars and have access to fine foods and other privileges and amenities. Sure, the population is in grinding oppression, but that's not the head. That's not how that continues.

The leverage and the control is perpetrated by those who are gratified by so doing. And this happens in our country. You have a great effort now to try to uncover and address waste, fraud, and abuse to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars, even in a single state or two that have been diverted, perverted, co-opted, sent overseas for other interests, American taxpayer money going to support other things, including terrorism.

And the population of this country isn't interested in funding terrorism, most of us, the great majority of us. We're not interested in sending our money overseas to be used in unknown ways. But these heads are representing those who are in control, the kings, whether they have a kingdom or not.

We want to translate this, the material aspect of this leverage into spiritual terms. Our struggle is not with the physicalities of this world. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

Many Christians have forgotten this and think that political activism and preaching against empire and calling out various things in the public square is the way to evidence and manifest Christian faith. In almost all cases, it is not. There may be those that have a calling, but for the vast majority of us, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

It is at a much more strategic level. The basic interaction with flesh and blood, that is the tactics, that's your fire teams and your squads. And as with the Marines, every Marine is a rifleman.

Every believer needs to be able to spot what is in our immediate periphery and deal with it in the material, physical, day-to-day, circumstantial life that we live. But we think strategically. This is why the Lord Jesus has given us this book of Revelation.

Lift your eyes to the hills. That's where our strength comes from. We are part of a larger struggle, a greater warfare, the conflict between light and darkness, between God and Satan, between Jerusalem and Babylon.

So spotting it is important. So when you see toward the close of chapter 17, these kings that have no kingdom will be of one mind. They will give their power and authority to the beast.

Notice, they have some other kind of power than what the beast has been expressing through the heads. These horns are pointed. Would you rather be hit with a bull's head or with his horns? The horns do far more damage.

I've seen rodeo clowns getting thrown all over the arena by a bull's horns. Head is bad enough. You can be smashed into the sidewalls, but the horns, and when the horns give their power to the beast, and he is operating that sixth head, and ultimately the seventh head, that's nearing the culmination of human history.

It is profound, it is unprecedented, and it is exceedingly dangerous. They give their power and authority to the beast. They make war with the lamb, and the lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings.

I'm in Revelation 17, 14. Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are called, chosen, and faithful. When you think about our study of what went wrong in each of the seven churches of Asia in chapters two and three, and what went right, what was strong and what was weak, what was good and what was bad, what was commended and what was condemned.

When we look at the aspects of Babylon, which we're going to review shortly, so that we can spot them, so that we can not be co-opted and taken in, and led by the crafty harlot down a dark street to a place that has far more promise than it has fulfillment. The ends thereof are the ways of death. It sounds so good, and it ends so badly.

How do we fortify ourselves? How can we see clearly and spot the con, spot the fraud, spot the lie, and the deception? Those who are with the lamb have not been taken in by Babylon, by the beast, by Satan's ploys, his wiles, his roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour. How did they do it? Notice what it says. Those who are with him are three things, called, chosen, and faithful.

Called. Remember Romans 8, 28 through 30? We know that all things, we often glance past those first few words. We know that all things work together for good.

To those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. Many are called, but few are chosen, Jesus said. Why is that? The first thing, and this is from our perspective, called, chosen, and faithful is our perspective.

There is a call, the call of God, the eternal gospel has gone out to all the earth. It is recognizing the call, hearing the call, considering the call, and acting on the call that makes us the called. Telemarketers can dial a thousand people, but when they're logging calls, it's only the ones that picked up the phone and engaged in a conversation that count.

The hangups, the voicemails, the no longer in services don't count. Who picked up the call? They are the ones who were called. Chosen are the ones who respond to the call.

I will honor those who honor me. I will choose those who choose me, God says. There is no one incapable of responding to that call.

When it is issued, there is free will. It is possible. There's no background, there's no limitation, there's no circumstance, there's no experience that limits response.

There are special categories. God has grace to deal with them. Those who pass away before they're old enough to fully understand, those that have mental limitations and so on.

God has grace to cover those situations, and we've talked about it at other times. But in the main, in the aggregate, there is a call. There is a response to the call.

Those who respond are chosen. In this age, we are chosen to be members of the body of Christ. We are filled with the Holy Spirit.

We are sealed. We are baptized. We are gifted.

We are given opportunities in the spirit, unlike anything in human history, chosen. And in light of that call, and in light of being elect, people that are non-reformed and non-Calvinist sort of hesitate to use the word elect, it's fine, because our election, our choosing is in Christ. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creation, and he's chosen.

God chooses his son, and God chooses those who honor his son. We are in Christ, therefore we share his election. We share his priesthood.

We share his status as a son of God, as a child of God. We share wonderful things. There's the beautiful menorah of things that are in him that we saw at the beginning chapters of Ephesians.

We'll be in Ephesians here shortly. So called, chosen, and faithful. If you want to avoid the seductions of Babylon, if you want to avoid those things that we're going to review here shortly, remember your calling.

Paul preaches this in one of his epistles. Remember your calling, brethren. Not many of you were mighty.

Not many of you were super smart. It doesn't need strength, and it doesn't need smarts. It needs response.

We recognize our need, and we find the solution to that need in Jesus Christ. We are grateful, we are called, we are chosen, and we are faithful. This is the key to being with Christ and not in Babylon.

We reviewed those passages last time. Go from Babylon, leave Babylon, lest you be judged. We saw this in verse four of chapter 18.

Another voice from heaven says, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins and receive of her plagues. You partake of her iniquity and you partake of her judgment. Go forth, come out," over and over again.

Can't come out of something you don't realize you're in. You've got to spot it. If you're in a bad relationship, you've got to know what marks a bad relationship.

If you're being abused, you've got to know what constitutes abuse. If you are being defrauded, you have to spot the fraud. There's so many schemes, email, texts.

Click this link, call this number. You're overdrawn, you're in some sort of trouble. The IRS has a lien and is about to come get you.

Contact us, we'll help you. You have to know the frauds to spot the fraud. What I love about the next illustration is where it puts our focus.

I've mentioned this before, you've probably heard it elsewhere, but the way they train treasury agents in spotting counterfeit currency, they don't typically spend a lot of time looking at the counterfeits. They study the real thing. They spend their time focused on these are the intimate detailed characteristics of real money.

Here's the safety ribbon. Here's the fibers in the paper. Here's the detail in the engraving.

This is what we'll be lacking in a counterfeit. And by immersing themselves in the characteristics of genuine currency, it becomes very easy when they then start showing slides. Here is where the counterfeits can't compare.

Look at the sloppiness of the printing. Look at the properties of the paper and so on. We immerse ourselves in the word of God and we will not be deceived.

The waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

The 10 horns, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. What does the harlot represent? This is false religion.

Israel with the crown of stars was representative of faithful Israel. You think of the faithful believers of the Old Testament, the Hebrews 11 types, those that lived during the time of the Lord Jesus, Simeon and Anna, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Joseph, Mary, and those who would respond to the ministry of the Lord Jesus in a positive way. These are representative of the beautiful woman crowned with 12 stars, blessed and protected by God, the Israel of God.

The harlot is false religion and government and religion have been wedded since the earliest days. The ziggurat they built in the plain of Shinar, the Tower of Babel was designed for sun worship and star worship. And it has been thus down through history.

And Satan has employed the distraction. I don't want you to see the God of Israel. I don't want to understand the Lord Jesus Christ in this age.

So let me foist the woman with her wonderful colors and her jewelry and her allure and her attraction. Let me distract you from going to find the woman who has been secured safely in the wilderness. Look at this woman, she's attractive.

It's back to the crafty harlot of the early chapters of Proverbs. This is false religion. Notice that at a certain point, partway through the 70th week of Daniel, the kings and the beast are going to turn and tear false religion to pieces on purpose.

Satan is motivating this. The heads and the horns, look at what they're going to do. They will hate the harlot.

They will make her desolate and naked. They will shred all of her finery and leave her shamed and naked. And they will eat her flesh.

They will consume her materiality. All of the things that have been a part of this, whether it's buildings, whether it's funds, whether it's operations, whether it is goods and services, whatever it may be, they are going to co-opt and consume all of this and take it to themselves. So here's the question as we go to the break.

What is going to replace the harlot? Why would Satan employ this system in concert with government to sit on the waters that represent peoples and tongues and nations, ethnicities, all down through history? Satan is the one that sat the woman on the beast. And now the beast is going to turn and tear her to pieces, eat her flesh and consume her with fire. Why? What takes its place? We'll watch for this.

When we come back from the break, we're going to review what this woman represents. We are going to see why she is destroyed and we're going to see what takes her place. Let's pause here and take our break.

