

Rev 26-05-27b

We're ready to pick up our study now here. We're going to move rather smartly through our review of Revelation chapter 17 and 18. One thing to notice in the closing section of chapter 17, we saw the ten horns in verse 12 that have no kingdom.

They are powerful guys. I don't think you can see a better pattern for this or suggestion of this than looking at those that are in charge of AI companies, social media companies. These are the powerhouses, the founders and CEOs of companies.

They don't need a country. They don't need a government. They've got a company that's got its fingers in every pie.

Not all of them are in this country. You think about some of the major media services that are headquartered in other countries, but you can see where as never before there is power that is equivalent to and even greater than governmental power on the earth today. And you see how this power is exercised, how it can sway opinions, how it can influence voting, influence policy decisions.

You can cut those services off and leave your people in the dark. You can slant and filter and use algorithms to mislead by omission in many cases, not giving a balanced look or a fair survey of the facts. And these are kings.

They are as powerful as any king in the ancient world ever was and more so because of their reach and the extent of their influence. But these in verse 13 are of one mind and they will give their power and authority to the beast. The beast is Satan.

They have been content to sit on the heads and to operate with this proxy appeal, this seductive interchange between false religion, whether it is secular humanism, whether it is materialism, whether it is various atheistic philosophies, also false religions. There is false Christianity, just as there was false Judaism in Jesus' day. The slaying of the prophets, Jesus told the people in his day, told the religious leadership, your fathers slew the prophets.

And these were leaders in what became Judaism. And they didn't want to hear the true word of God. They had an agenda.

They wanted to sit in power. They wanted to be in the good graces of kings and princes and potentates. And so they corrupted their morals by the merchandising, by the selling of their influence.

And of course, you can see this throughout the history of the Catholic church. You can also see it in Islam. You can see it in many other religions, including materialism, socialism, secular humanism, and others that call themselves philosophies, but they are garnering religious fervor

and religious dedication and intensity.

And they all fall under Babylon. It is as old as the Tower of Babel in the Plain of Shinar, as we will shortly see. So they will make war with the lamb.

Notice in verse 14, they have unseated the woman. The gloves are off. The deception is over with.

The proxying, the hand inside the velvet glove has shredded away the velvet glove. And now it is a naked fist. And it is going to go directly against the lamb.

How can the powers of this earth, who are beyond governmental, make war with the lamb? By attacking his body, his followers. His body, of course, the church, has already been raptured. But those who have the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

We saw a parallel to this when earlier on, back in chapter 12, where the dragon goes against the woman and the rest of her offspring, who have the testimony of Jesus. Testimony, they are part of Israel. They are children of the woman with the crown of 12 stars, but they have the testimony of Jesus.

To make war against the lamb is possible on earth by attacking all of those who have the testimony. If you could wipe out the testimony, there would be no presence of the lamb in their minds. So they will make war, but the lamb will overcome them.

He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those who are with him are called, chosen, and faithful. We saw this a week ago.

Then he said, the waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. The ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot. They will make her desolate, naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill his purpose. God has put it in their hearts. They are going to be the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation when it comes to judging Babylon.

This is important for understanding chapter 18. God has put it in their hearts to be of one mind. God has put it in their hearts to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

The woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. Now we come to chapter 18. After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, great authority, earth illuminated with his glory, cries mightily with a loud voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.

That has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird. Now the question is, has it become this before or after its fall? And I am

of the opinion that the reason Babylon is fallen is that it has become this. It has gone further and further into demonic, satanic influence to the point where Satan says, I just don't really even need the facade anymore.

I'm just going to come out with my naked visible presence to finish this conflict. It has come to this. He doesn't want to work through a proxy anymore because it's not strong enough or powerful enough or effective enough.

As much damage as he has done with false religion, he's going to shed that skin like a snake and reveal his personhood in these closing days of the 70th week. The nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.

I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, lest you receive of her plagues. I want to read you a quick something. This is a helpful summary I found somewhere because there's been a long history of interpretation that says that the Babylon of chapter 18 is different than chapter 17.

Chapter 17 is sort spiritual false religion. Babylon chapter 18 is an actual physical entity, a resurrected city of Babylon actually there in Iraq or something that goes by the name. And as worthy interpreters as Dr. Walvard and others have decided that there are two different entities here.

I disagree and I will tell you why. First of all, they will make points like the 10 horns destroy the woman in chapter 17 and God is the direct agent of destruction in chapter 18. There seems to be spiritual fornication at work in 17.

There is political and economic factors that are emphasized in 18. And so, is it two different entities? One clue, and you can observe a lot by watching, as you know, when you start chapter 18, this mighty angel comes down from heaven. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.

Notice in verse five of the preceding chapter, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, the very same name Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prisoner, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird. By the way, the word cage and prison are the same. It's the exact same word.

I don't know why they wanted to vary it. They said, oh, bird cage. It's the same word.

It's both. And it's not prison like we think of prison. You've got a prison sentence and you're going to serve 20 years for some offense.

This is where people were incarcerated awaiting trial and sentencing. So, a better translation would be jail. We put people in jail because we're going to take them to court.

We're going to try them and then we're going to sentence them to something. But prison and cage really aren't the right words. Jail is the closest English equivalent.

So, Babylon has become a dwelling place of demons, a jail for every foul spirit and a jail for every unclean and hated bird. This goes back to our understanding of some of Jesus' parables where the mustard seed grows into a great tree and the birds of the air nest in its branches. This is not a good thing.

Birds of the air come and peck away the seeds that fall on the hard soil in the parable of the soils. These birds are usually the unclean and hated birds. This is not turtledoves and nightingales and robins and wrens and happy birds.

These are different categories. And by the way, notice that there are three sorts here. It is a prison for foul spirits or a jail.

It is a dwelling place, a habitation for demons. Demons and foul spirits are distinguished. There are orders, there are distinctions, just as there are with the unfallen angels.

They have different roles, they have different fates. We're not super clear and we don't need to be. These things are kept well away from us by the power of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I don't have to know if some particular representative of fallen forces is a demon or a foul spirit there. Do I need to know if a guy is a staff NCO or an enlisted on the enemy army? They all need to be eliminated. But there is a distinction and probably further study might illuminate this, but they are different and they are distinguished and there is unclean and hated birds.

So demons are what the Lord Jesus interacted with in his earthly ministry. They had the power to possess, to cause disease and physical limitation. I think foul spirits seem to operate more in the realm of a stench in the air.

I think they pollute thinking and policy. They obscure, they seem to operate more in the mental realm, if I had to speculate. Demons, the Lord Jesus had to cast them out because what they did to people physically come out of him and suddenly they're no longer hurting themselves or suffering from physical affliction.

Foul spirits, this seems to be something like what King Saul suffered with in terms of mental oppression. And these unclean and hated birds, these fly from place to place and defecate. They just ruin things in a scattershot and somewhat haphazard fashion.

They seem to be more of a flock of unsavory influences that find favorable opportunities to influence groups rather than individuals. Again, this is my speculation. I'm pointing out that there are three categories here.

This becomes important a little bit further down. All the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.

Notice there is political power. There seems to be military power and economic power all wrapped up in this use of the lust of the flesh. If there's one thing Babylon represents as she sits on the back of the beast, it is the appeal to the lust of the flesh and exchanging, manipulating people and getting them to give up something of value in exchange for short-term and even momentary gratification.

That's what harlots do. That's what fornication is. It is giving up long-term value for short-term gratification and it is a deception.

And this goes from low to high, from the people all the way up to the kings. Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, receive of her plagues. Her sins have reached to heaven.

This phrase reached to heaven. Notice you've got a text note there, at least in my New King James. It says the better text should read have been heaped up.

And this I am sure is the original reading. These sins have been heaped up. This means to stack or to build a tower.

It is a direct reference back to the tower of Babel. Her sins have stacked up in a building, in a heap, in a tower of Babylon, endeavoring to substitute human salvation, human ideas of wisdom. We will observe the stars.

We will figure out what's really going on. We will raise ourselves up to heaven, into the heavens, and we'll do it without God. Her sins have been heaped up to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities, rendered to her just as she rendered and repay her double according to her works.

In the cup which she has mixed, makes double for her. Remember verse four of chapter 17, she has in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. This is the same entity.

Sometimes we ask the question, well, is it A or is it B? And the answer is yes, it is both. This Babylon mystery represents both false religion and all of its outworkings in the political, social, economic, and spiritual realms. She is so huge and has been around so long that it takes two chapters to fully describe both her rise, her dominance, and her ultimate judgment and fall.

Babylon is fallen, is fallen, fallen in 17, fallen in 18. She is judged directly by God using the agency of the 10 horns. God is doing the same thing that he always does.

He has used corrupt, fallen, godless nations to accomplish his purpose because he's God. He can work all things together for the good of his people and for the ultimate judgment and

elimination of those things that are abominable. We saw what abominations are.

Rendered to her just as she rendered, repay her double according to her works. In the cup which she has mixed, makes double for her in the measure that she glorified herself and lived deliciously, luxuriously. In the same manner, give her torment and sorrow.

For she says in her heart, I sit as queen and am no widow and will not see sorrow. This is a direct allusion to several Old Testament passages. We'll take a quick look at them.

When she says, I sit as queen and am no widow, and she's got this cup in her hand. When you look at this cup, you find that it is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. There are different kinds of cups.

Think about the cups just off the top of your head. What's the first emphasis on a cup that you can think of in Scripture? Think back to Genesis. Think back to Joseph.

Think back to Pharaoh. And there are individuals imprisoned. And there's the cup bearer.

And he can think that that cup is going to be good. It depends on what the vision portends. Right? You think of Psalm 23.

Now prepares the table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over.

A cup of blessing. Paul talks about this to the Corinthians. The cup of blessing, which we bless.

You cannot drink the cup of blessing and the cup of demons. There are two different cups. There is the cup that the Lord Jesus spoke of with his father in Gethsemane.

Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me. Was that a cup of blessing? No. Was it a cup of judgment? In a way, he is going to bear the judgment of those who should be drinking that cup.

But it is, I would call it a cup of suffering service. The Lord Jesus is going to accomplish the will of the father through suffering, undeservedly, unjustly. That's why he can say to James and John, when they and their mother come and say, grant to us that we can sit on each side of you in the kingdom.

And he says, can you drink the cup that I am about to drink? Can you be baptized? James and John are not going to bear the judgment of others, but they are going to suffer in the service of the Lord, the testimony of Jesus, holding it and being faithful unto death, both of them, both in the early days of the church age. And I personally think, coming back as the two witnesses, they will be baptized with the baptism of the Lord Jesus, where they are allowed to be martyred. They bear witness and are faithful unto death to that witness.

They bear the testimony of Jesus. Most of us, our suffering is big in our own eyes. But you think

about the suffering that has been endured by some, and we can actually be grateful that our suffering is mitigated and moderated by grace and by the amelioration that comes when we are not in the early days of the Roman empire, when we are not crucified and otherwise torn apart simply for holding fast the testimony of Jesus.

We hold that testimony as we endure hardship, deprivation, physical suffering, economic suffering, setbacks, cancellation, being put off and rejected by those around us. We can put it into perspective. But there is a cup of suffering in service, in holding fast the testimony.

Seldom are we called upon to be faithful unto death in a dangerous and bloody sense. We want to hold the testimony until we die from whatever cause. Be faithful unto death.

Look ahead to the crown of life that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for us as a part of inheritance. How real is that to us? Think about that as we think about the cup. But this woman says, I sit as queen.

Jeremiah 7, verse 18, the children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven. This was the Old Testament worship in the high places, Ashtar. They pour out drink offerings to other gods that they may provoke me to anger, God says.

Jeremiah 44, 17, we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food. We were well off and we saw no trouble.

Look at the short-term gain. Look at the remuneration. Look at the exchange, the merchandise that we got by burning incense to the queen of heaven, pouring out drink offerings to her.

We've done it, our fathers did it, our kings and our princes did it, our leaders, and look how we benefited, short-sighted, short-term. I am no widow. Isaiah 47, verse 7, talking to Babylon, you said, I shall be a lady forever, so that you did not take these things to heart, nor remember the latter end of them.

Therefore, hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, I am, and there is no one else beside me. I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children. I will not be a widow, says Babylon in Isaiah 47, 7 and 8. Lamentations 1.1, Jeremiah's next production, how lonely sits the city that was full of people.

How like a widow she is, who was great among the nations. The princess among the provinces has become a slave. This living deliciously, this cup that she bears.

Psalms 75, 8. In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red. It is fully mixed, he pours

it out. Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down.

She has mixed this cup, mix her a double portion. Jeremiah 25, 15. Thus says the Lord God of Israel to me, take this wine cup of fury from my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it.

And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them. Verse 26 of that same chapter, this is Jeremiah 25, 15, 16 and 26. All the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, hear this now, all of the kings, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth.

Also the king of Shishak shall drink after them. The king of Shishak, who is the king of Shishak? I'm going to leave you with a little bit of a great insight. The king of Shishak.

This is a reference, believe it or not, to the king of Babylon. The name Shishak is nowhere found associated with Babylon, so how do we know that's what it is? It doesn't appear in any ancient texts, doesn't show up on any map, but this is a code name for Babylon. In ancient Israel, they had a simple little code.

When I was a kid, we had the box and dot code. You could make three tic-tac-toe hashes and put A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I in the first one, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R in the second one, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z and a period in the third one, and you've got all the letters of the alphabet. Then, all you do is use the portion of that hash for the letters.

If you want an A, it looks like a backward L. If you want a B, it looks like a U. If you want a C, it looks like a regular L. When you get to the second hash, where you've got A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, it starts with J. Well, that's going to look just like an A, except you put one dot in it. And K is like a B, but it's got a dot in it. L is like C, but it's got a dot in it.

So, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R. When you get to the second one, S is going to look like an A, but it's got two dots in it. You tell which of the three meshes to use. It's a cipher.

It's a simple way to encode a message. We used to have great fun writing notes to each other and slipping them up and down the chairs in class and sending little funny things to be decoded. There are simple substitution things.

This is a cipher, and it's really simple. You take the Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters, Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, He, Val, Zion, Kret, Teit, Yod, Kaf, Lamed, all the way down. And then beside it, you reverse it.

And so you've got Tav, then Sheen, and you work your way backwards. I don't think I can do it by memory, through the alphabet. So Aleph is replaced by Tav.

Bet is replaced by Sheen. Well, notice we have Shishak. So Sheen stands for Bet, and the K

there stands for Lamed.

Kaf, Lamed, they're right in the middle. So what you end up with is Shishak decodes to BBL, Babel, Babylon. And the king of Shishak is the king of Babylon.

By the way, those who want to say that the prophets were late and were composed well after the fact and so on, the reason that Jeremiah had to write this way is he was alive during the time when Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. And to write out prophecies of his destruction and drinking the wine of the wrath of God was dangerous to life and limb. And so those who were carrying this message didn't want to be caught with something that could be construed as dangerous propaganda against the rulers that be.

So they encoded it. And king of Babel becomes king of Shishak. But it is something that gave great hope to those who were already going into exile and those who would endure the exile and eventually come back on the other side that God would judge Babylon.

So a little extra tidbit there, free no charge. But this is called the Atbash cipher. And you get that by Aleph is Tav, that's A-T, and Beit is Sheen, that's B-S-H.

So A-T-B-S-H, Atbash. It's called the Atbash cipher. And it is found in other contexts as well.

But Shishak is a classic example. What is the upshot of all of this? The Babylon of chapter 18 is the same as the Babylon of chapter 17. It is just a different aspect, a different side.

This is the commercial and political side that is mourned. And we've seen, especially verses 12 and 13, verse 14, circle it, the fruit your soul longed for has gone from you. The human soul is built for the fruit of the Spirit, the presence and power of the Word of God, the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our age, and God the Father and the Spirit.

That's what we should long for. If you try to shovel earthly, temporal, ready-to-rot fruit, it is going to rot. It is going to turn to ashes.

It is not going to satisfy. There's countless examples of people that have attained the pinnacle of their profession, of power, of whatever, and when they get to the top, they look around and they're unhappy. They're unfulfilled.

Is this all there is? We have a God-shaped vacuum in our soul. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you. All the things which are rich and splendid have been lost to you, and you shall find them no more at all.

The merchants of these things who became rich will stand at a distance by fear of her torment. I am still of the mind that Babylon stands for things throughout history, but there are also specific iterations to include Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, to include later versions of Babylon that have risen and fallen, to include things like the Catholic Church, and to include this country. It is not

without significance that she is dressed in fine linen.

The word for that is related to alabaster. It means white. White, then you have porphyry, which is bluish purple, and you have the word for scarlet or red in Greek.

White, blue, and red. Work it backwards, red, white, and blue. And you can easily imagine, as this country embraces the values of spiritual Babylon, and its people become enmeshed and allured and entranced and hypnotized by what it seems to offer, that our nation can be destroyed in one hour.

And those who do trade and commerce with us, listen to the president talking about how central we are to world trade. Imagine what happens if we are judged because there aren't enough believers left, and we spiritually have to come out lest we share in her plagues and partake of her sins. Mentally, spiritually, we've got to come out of this country with its downward tread, with its shallow values, with its evil intentions, and its complete rejection of things that are good, righteous, biblical, and true, and its embrace of that which is the product of every foul spirit and every hateful bird.

Demonic, satanic. As our nation, as a whole, embraces and promotes these things, and you see it all over. You see it in social media, insinuating itself into the minds of young people in a corrosive and destructive way.

The suicide rate has never been higher. The drug dependence rate, and when it talks about her sorceries, that's pharmacheia. You look at the dependence on drugs of all different kinds in this country.

Don't think that one adumbration of this final judgment that will take place after we're gone wouldn't be this country being taken out by terroristic forces fueled by Satan, wanting to stamp out what's left of a biblical foundation and a scriptural witness, martyreo, as we have it in this country. We are witnesses, and we need to stand out and be distinct from Babylon. Go out from her, come out from among them, and be ye separate.

Do not partake of her sins, lest you partake of her plagues. Spiritually true in any case. But that brings us to chapter 19.

One of the ways we know, and this is my final point, slightly over here, but I just want to make this final point. I'm bound and determined to get into chapter 19, hell or high water. After these things, I heard a loud voice, great multitude in heaven saying, Hallelujah, salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God.

True and righteous are his judgments. He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants shed by her.

Again, they said, Hallelujah, her smoke rises up forever and ever. We're going to see a lot about

this. We know other things about smoke that rises forever and ever, yet the entity that was destroyed by the fire and smoke is no longer there.

The 24 elders, the four living creatures, last time we see them, haven't seen them for many chapters. They fall down and worship God who sits on the throne saying, Amen. Hallelujah.

Then a voice came from the throne saying, praise our God, all you, his servants and those who fear him, small and great. I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, the sound of many waters, sound of mighty thunders. Harks back to the thunders earlier saying, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

You can hear Handel's Messiah ringing with that phrase. Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. To her, it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright.

That's all she needs. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. That tells you the false nature of the adornment of the scarlet harlot.

I fell at his feet to worship. He said to me, see that you don't do that. I'm your fellow servant of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God. Here's our final thought. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

This is what we've been aiming at in this study of revelation, the spirit of prophecy. It's a wonderful thing to study prophecy, things to come, things of the end times. How are things aligning? God tells us what's going to happen before it happens.

But what is the spirit of prophecy? The pneuma is the word here. What is the breath? What is the inspiration? What is the goal and the purpose? The spirit filled reason that God gives prophecy, the testimony of Jesus. When we come away from revelation, we shouldn't be thinking about the antichrist or the beast or the number or the mark or the seals, the trumpets, the thunders, the bulls.

We should be thinking about the Lord Jesus, appreciating him, coming to a better understanding and a greater love for him. Remember the very first church, Ephesus? You have lost your first love. The spirit of prophecy is so that we can have and hold the testimony to be his body, to bear witness to him, for him, to represent him on this earth and whatever time remains to us in this life.

That's what this prophecy is for. It's very exciting. We're going to move further into Revelation 19 next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this tremendous gift from heaven, this revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory in the first chapter, in his teaching and gifts and promises to us in the second and third chapter, in his role as the Lamb as it had been slain. The Lion of the tribe of Judah first appears

as the Lamb to see the unfolding and the consummation of history, where these things that had been tolerated and had been allowed to pertain will be brought together and judged across the span of time, across the realm of human history, from beginning to end, and the celebration and the joy in heaven when you accomplish this in your time, in your way, for your glory and for our benefit. We pray that as we reflect on these things, God the Holy Spirit will help us to see their pertinence and application on an hourly and daily basis.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.