

The Mother of all False Religions

Revelation 17:1-7

(preached Pine Grove 7/9/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to the final book of the Bible...

The book of Revelation chapter 17...

Today, we inch ever closer to the end of end times in the book of Revelation...

Let me read the passage we will look at today, and then we will go back and look at each verse of it in more detail...

Revelation 17:1-7...

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." 3 And he carried me away [a]in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven

heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and [b]adorned with gold and precious [c]stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, 5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the [d]saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered [e]greatly. 7 And the angel said to me, "Why [f]do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Let us pray...

I want to show you a very popular bumper sticker of the past 10 years...

It is bumper that reads "Coexist," and the letters used to spell out the word are symbols of the world's greatest religions...

You have the Islamic crescent, the Jewish star, the Christian cross, the paganistic/satanic pentagram that dots the eye...

There are even variations of the sticker that are drawn to include Buddhists and atheistic scientists and even environmental religions...

But the point of the bumper sticker is to promote the idea that all the world's major religions just simply need to get along...

And the underlying thought of coexistence is the idea that all the major religions of the world are essentially the same...

The phrase we often hear is that there are multiple ways to get to God and that all the fussing and fighting over which religion is right is worthless...

The sad reality is that many "so-called" Christians display this bumper sticker and even share the same views, even though Jesus plainly spoke that that there is no way to God but through Him...

You see, all major religions of the world aren't equal...

In fact, they clearly contradict one another in major ways...

They don't worship the same God in different ways...

There is but one God who has revealed Himself in creation and in the Bible, and He is the God of the Christian faith...

All the other supposed gods of all the other 100s of other religions are false gods...

Counterfeits and copies of the real God..

Now the difficulty of false religions is really two fold...

One, some are very good counterfeits of the true God...

They share some of the same views of God as biblical Christianity, so it makes it hard to see the important differences...

Two, so many people are caught up in false religion that we wonder how they could be all that bad...

Therefore, we make the critical mistake of assuming that false religions can't be false if so many people adhere to them...

So, how are we to think about false religions?

What is the origin of them?

What is the future of them?

Well, today in Revelation 17, we get a crash course in false religious systems...

Now, this may seem to be an unusual place to learn about false religions being that we are at studying the end times...

But in fact, it is not for this simple reason...

False religion will exist to the very end of time, and the reason it will exist that long is that Satan will use it to build his earthly kingdom under the Antichrist...

So today, we get an inside look at this false religious system of the end times..

And in the process, we get a little history of false religion since the beginning of the world, while also arming ourselves to spot false religions and avoid them..

So, let's jump into this by re-reading verse 1 of Revelation 17...

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

As we get to chapter 17, we are at the end of the world...

The final 7 judgment of God have been poured out upon the earth..

The only judgment left is the second coming of Christ to the earth to defeat the armies of the world that have gathered to fight against Him in the valley of Armageddon...

We will see how that plays out in chapter 19....

But God in his wisdom gives us two chapters in between the final bowl being poured out and the return of Christ to look at something very important...

And that is the fall of the world's evil system led by Satan...

Now, in the actual chronology of how things go in the end of time...

You will have bowl #7 poured out and then Jesus will mount his horse and return to defeat the Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet immediately after that 7th bowl...

There will be no break for rest, but bowl after bowl after bowl judgment then Jesus comes to claim the earth for Himself...

However, as John was given a picture of this action of the end, God allowed him to get more details of how things will end and we benefit from what John saw...

And in chapters 17 and 18, John saw how the final evil kingdom of the world will fall...

Look back up at Rev 16:19 for a second...

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the [l]nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of [m]His fierce wrath.

As the 7th bowl was poured out, the city of Jerusalem was split into 3 parts, but Babylon the great was destroyed...

And what we get in chapters 17 and 18 are a description of how Babylon fell...

Chapter 17 will be the a description of the religious fall of Babylon...

Chapter 18 will be a description of the political and economic fall of Babylon...

So, these chapters are really a parenthesis to give us the description of their fall..

Now the word Babylon has a couple ideas associated with it in the end times...

First, Babylon will be a physical city located south of Baghdad in Iraq...

Saddam Husein began rebuilding the city in the 1990s and it continues even today..

But one day, the city will be a headquarters of the Antichrist...

The location makes sense if you look at the geography of that area...

Babylon is almost the exact center where Europe, Asia and the Middle East come together along with Africa to the southeast and Russia to the north...

If you plan to rule the world, it is best to be in the center of it, so Babylon will be a physical city...

But Babylon is also a system of evil that speaks of a global political, economic and religious system....

For today, we will concentrate on this religious system and its fall at the end of time...

Now, we may think that the world is getting less and less religious, but the opposite is actually...

People are very religious, not in the sense of devotion
the true God of the world..

But in the sense of worshipping and devoting themselves
to someone or something..

Even atheists are religious...

They are devoted to and worship science...

You see people are made worshipful creatures and we
worship whether we know it or not...

And as the end approaches, men and women will be
more and more religious as they seek help from all the
judgments that are coming...

And that is where Satan steps in and offers false religion
to the masses...

Now, this is nothing new...

In fact, false religion began in the garden where Eve
chose to listen to Satan's words over God's word and ate
of the the fruit...

And it had grown ever since that day...

False religion was so bad in Noah's day that God judged the whole world to rid the world of it....

But it came back even in the line of Noah after the flood, and it grew out of control one again....

Take your Bibles and go from the end of time to the beginning of time in Genesis 11...

In Genesis 11, we are past the global flood by a few chapters, and Noah and his sons have begun to repopulate the earth...

Now, we aren't talking billions of people here, but there is a large number of people...

So God restates his original command to Noah and his sons, "Go, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

And that begins to happen as the sons of Noah have children and so on...

But then we get to chapter 11 of Genesis...

And let's begin reading in verse 1....

11 Now the whole earth [a]used the same language and [b]the same words. 2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and [c]settled there. 3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

The sin here is disobedience and pride...

First, the people are disobedient...

They don't want to obey the Lord and fill the earth, so they stop and build a city with a tower that will stretch to heaven..

Stopping is the sin of disobedience and then the desire to make a name for themselves is pride...

Now, we an earth that speaks the same language congregating in a city and wanting their name to be greater than God's...

This isn't going to have a happy ending...

Verse 5...

5 The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 The Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have [d]the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be [e]impossible for them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their [f]language, so that they will not understand one another’s [g]speech.” 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

The Lord breaks up the party and the city and the tower and he causes them to scatter which is what he wanted in the first place...

Now this is a monumental day in world history for a number of reasons...

First, this scattering leads to the various languages of the world, the various skin colors of the world, and the various nations of the world...

Which are all good and glorify God, who loves both unity and diversity....

But there is also a negative side to the scattering as well..

This idea of false religion where a man can build a city to God...

This idea of false religion where man seeks to make a name for himself...

This evil demonic way of thinking was all scattered as well...

And in that scattering, you see all sorts of false religious systems emerge...

And I want you to see here the foundation of all false religion is pride and disobedience to God...

False religions are not concerned with God's glory but their own glory..

False religions don't exist to make God's name big but their own name...

False religions are also built on the idea that man can make a way to God...

This tower to heaven sounds ridiculous, but there are millions of people in false religions and maybe here today who think they can pile up enough good works to get to heaven...

Understand that the Catholic church, the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, Muslims and Hindus and all the false religions of the world make this fatal mistake...

They believe that the way to God is built upon a system of good works...

They all have their own towers they are trying to build to God...

And this isn't a new idea...

It goes back to the very beginning of time...

It is in our hearts as well as we think that God is pleased by us doing good deeds...

That was the sin here in chapter 11 of Genesis...

But the truth is that your good works can never build a staircase to heaven...

Now, take note of the name that was given to this city...

Verse 9...

9 Therefore its name was called [h]Babel, because there the Lord confused the [i]language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

The area of the city was called Shinar, but the city was called Babel, which means confusion.....

Now, does that sound familiar?

It should because Babel or Babylon became the mother of all false religions...

As the people scattered, they took this disobedience, pride, and the idea of good works all over the face of the earth...

And though the nations grew and languages developed and cultures were formed, false religions also began to grow as well...

So Babylon was the beginning of false religious systems....

Now, let's go back to Revelation 17....

And what we see here is the final form all of false religions, and it should be no surprise to see the name of this final form of false religion...

Look back at Revelation 17...

This final false religion is represented by a woman called a harlot or prostitute who sits on a beast....

And we will talk about what all this means, but for now...

Notice her name in verse 5..

“BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

You see in the end of time, all false religions come back to mama..

The tower of Babel that gave birth to false religions result in a final false religion known as Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth...

And the reason that false religion is seen as a harlot or prostitute is that God views allegiance to him as a marriage...

So often in the Bible, marriage describes the relationship between God and His people...

The church is the bride of Christ...

Israel in the OT is described as being wed to their God...

And all false religions are violations of the God's relationship with his people...

Yet, mankind seeks gods other than their rightful husband, who is God alone...

And when we get to the end of time, all false religion comes home and is centered in a one world false religion seen in the harlot of Revelation 17...

And what we see in these verses today are the picture of all false religions rolled into one...

So, let's begin to look at 5 characteristics of false religions...

And these will be true in that day, but they are also true today...

The first is seen in verse 1...

I. False Religions are Widespread (1)

As Rev 17 opens, John is approached by an angel who helped pour out the bowl judgments...

And he tells John that he will show him how Babylon began to fall with the 7th bowl judgment...

And the first target of fall was the harlot who we have identified as Babylon the great, the mother of all false religion...

And the first thing we know about her is that she sits on many waters...

And the picture here is of false religions that are widespread around the globe...

The influence of false religion is far reaching....

There isn't a corner of the earth immune to false religions and forms of worship...

And that will certainly be true at the end times as the world is falling apart...

People will be flocking to all sorts of false religion to seek shelter from the disasters around them...

But none will offer hope, except the gospel of Christ...

None will save except salvation found in the name of Jesus..

This is the sadness of false religion...

It spreads like wildfire but it offers no real hope....

The book of Jude describes false prophets and their false religious systems as clouds without rain...

Well, in the last days, there will be clouds of false religion everywhere but none will offer a drop of saving rain...

And look, don't be deceived into thinking that false religion is confined to Islam which seems to be the target of most American eyes today...

Yes, Islam is a false religion that is spreading but so are Jehovah's Witnesses that live around you and Mormonism and Roman Catholicism in our our backyards..

But so is the false religion of good works that some of you may hold to as you try to make sure the scale of your life has more good works than bad works...

Let me remind you, the people of Babel had a tower of good works that they placed on their side of the scale but they were no closer to God than when they started...

The Bible is clear...

Our attempts at salvation based upon our good works are like filthy rags to God...

Salvation is by faith alone in the works of Christ apart from any good works we can offer...

Unfortunately, people around the world cling to the good works gospel of false religions and that will be very true in the end times as the harlot of false religion sits on many waters...

A second characteristic of false religion seen here in Revelation 17 is this...

II. False Religions are Prostituted (2-3)

Not only are false religions a harlot in the sense that people commit adultery against God with the false religious systems...

False religions also can be prostituted and bought out by the highest bidder...

Look at verse 2...

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." 3 And he carried me away [a]in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

The picture of the harlot here is that she is committing adultery with the kings of the earth...

And the symbolism is this...

False religions are used by the kingdoms of the world to accomplish their political purposes...

If you at world history, wars are fought in the name of religion...

And kings and presidents and prime ministers justify their actions by turning to false religious systems...

You are watching the advance of Islam into the western world...

Europe is overrun with Muslims...

America is growing more and more Muslim...

The fight is not a religious fight by a political fight under the name of a false religious system...

Muslims have a desire for world power based on their craving and lust for power....

Islam simply becomes the vehicle to greater power...

And this is nothing new...

This is the pattern of world history...

And before you think too highly of yourselves, I would remind you that is also the pattern of our nation...

How many people with a craving for the power of political office come to the church looking for support?

How many politicians pose as “Mr Sunday church goer” to gain votes and win elections?

This is the prostitution of religion even within Christianity, and unwise, immature Christians allow it to happen because they too are seeking power...

You see, world leaders understand the power of religious organizations to sway voters and win elections...

And in the end of time, the Antichrist will allow the false religion of Babylon to hope on his back and he will use the influence of false religion to win the world to him...

This is the picture of verses 2 and 3 of Revelation 17....

The Antichrist is the beast of verse 3 who allows the harlot of false religion on his back in order to win the allegiance of the entire world as the tribulation period begins...

Now, you see the picture of seven heads and 10 horns here on the beast...

And if you were here for the book of Daniel, these pieces of the puzzle fit perfectly....

You see the kingdoms of the world that ruled over Israel have been 7 in number...

Egypt ruled them...

Assyria conquered and ruled them..

The Babylonians conquered and ruled them...

The Persians conquered and ruled them...

The Greeks became the 5th head to rule over them..

Followed by the Romans and in the end of time, the 7th and final ruler of the world will be the Antichrist....

And the tens horns are symbolic of how the Antichrist will begin his rule...

He will rule with 10 other world leaders as the tribulation begins....

Remember, the first half of the final 7 years is a time of world peace that the Antichrist will establish for 3 1/2 years...

In this time, false world religions will flourish and “co-exist in peace.”

In fact, the peace will be some refreshing that the major false religions of the world will begin to throw their support behind the Antichrist...

Who will ride that wave of peace and that support of the false religions of the world to a place of world power that hasn't been seen since the days of Caesar and the Roman Empire..

The Antichrist will bring in 10 leaders under him and the world will be one big happy place...

As the world finally gets a world leader it trusts....

It experiences world peace and even the makings of a world economy and world religion are taking shape...

It will be the best of times for a while anyway....

All true Christians will be gone in the rapture and the world will begin to buy into the lie that it is better off without Christianity.....

And remember, the Antichrist will let those false religion of the harlot ride with him to world power....

Because this is the second characteristic of false religion...

It hitches itself to political purposes, since it has no true God to worship...

And the harlot of Babylon will join itself to the persuasive reign of the Antichrist as she rides it to worldwide fame...

And false religion will love that as they begin to make a name for themselves in the world....

Now, we have only gotten through 2 of the 5 characteristics of false religious systems...

We have 3 more to go and we will get there next week...

But let me end with a few closing thoughts...

Conclusion

#1 - False religion is a reality.

This may seem obvious, but there is a growing trend in the world to never call anyone out as being wrong...

Especially when it comes to what they believe...

I want to be clear...

Devotion to a religion does not have anything to do with the truthfulness of it..

Our minds cannot deal with the fact that good people who do good things in the name of their religion can be so wrong...

So, we simply make room in our mind for the fact that God could have created other religions that lead to Him..

Let me be clear...

Jesus Himself spoke clearly on the matter...

There is salvation and access to God in no other name but His...

To be a Christian and to hold to the possibility that there are other ways to God is to deny the very words of Christ.

#2 - False religion is tempting.

You may say, “well, I am not tempted to join up with ISIS and begin beheading Christians...”

And you may not, but the minute that you cling to your good works, your good morals, your church attendance, or the fact that you are simply a good person, you are now a part of the same false religion as ISIS.

The reason that false religion is so tempting is this...

We want to feel like we contribute to our salvation...

This is why people like tradition and order and routine and ceremony when they go to church...

They want to feel like they are doing something to make themselves more spiritual...

Do you know what the gospel says?

God saves you based upon your faith alone in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ apart from any good work...

You see, all false religions offer you the chance to ‘do something’ in order to be saved...

And that is tempting because your fallen flesh has a desire to do something to be saved...

I would simply say to you...

If you want to do something to be saved, repent and trust in Christ alone...

#3 - False religion is doomed.

Though we didn't get there today, God will bring all false religion to an end..

What we have yet to see is this..

The Antichrist will turn on the harlot and demand that all the false religions of the world begin to worship him...

And that is exactly what will happen, but as soon as the Antichrist gains the worship of the world, he meets the Kings of kings and all is lost...

You see, false religion is doomed because the creator of false religion is doomed...

IF you think of all the false religions of the world, they have another thing in common...

Look at this final slide...

Not only is Satan doomed, the leaders of false religions are also doomed...

Their earthly leaders are dead...

Muhammad and Muslims.....Dead..

Buddha and Buddhists....Dead

Joseph Smith and the Mormons...Dead.

Charles Taze Russell and the Jehovahs'
Witnesses....Dead..

Why attach yourself to a leader who couldn't escape the grave when you can attach yourself to Christ who overcame death and the grave...

If you want to live forever, you better repent of your sin and put your faith in the only one who gave give eternal life...

That is Jesus Christ..

Let us pray.

