

Chapter XV

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT

In our last two chapters we have learned that the parables of our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew were directly related to the seven churches in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation. We have learned that five of our Lord's parables supplied a portrayal of negative influences that would be brought to bear upon the churches throughout the church age. We have also learned that during the same period of time, two of the parables have revealed the positive influence of faithfully proclaiming the gospel of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no question that there were genuine believers in Judaism when the Jews were the custodians of the truth; and there is no question that there are faithful believers under the canopy of Christianity in this present church age: God has always had a believing remnant (Isaiah 1:9; Romans 11:5). Even so our Lord's parables were prophetic. They have shown us that from the beginning, there has been little difference between professing Christians in the church age, than

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there was with the Jews when Israel was the custodian of the truth. The masses in both Israel and the church have, over time, succumbed to the negative influences brought to bear upon them. Very early in church history there were battles for *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 1:3). These battles occurred because of those who *crept in unawares* (Jude 1:4) and *spoke evil of those things which they [knew] not: but what they [knew] naturally* (Jude 1:10). Jude compared them to Cain, Balaam and Korah (Jude 1:11).

The faith is a fragile commodity in the hands of religious men, because *no lie is of the truth* (I John 2:21). This has been seen in the first century in five of the seven churches in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. It can also be seen in the church at Corinth. A few years after this church was established, it already had those within it who denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Corinthians 15:12). This was not a slight deviation from the truth, this was a denial of a fundamental element of the gospel: for if Christ did not rise from the dead, *our preaching is vain, and [our] faith is also vain* (I Corinthians 15:14). Further, Paul had just returned from his first missionary journey into Asia when he had to deal with the problem of the Galatian heresy, both in his epistle to the Galatians (Galatians 1:6) and in the counsel at Jerusalem. This heresy asserted that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved (Acts 15:1).

This counterfeit gospel ran rampant throughout the churches. The apostle Paul dealt with it in his epistle to the Galatians and as a sub-theme in most of his other epistles. Nevertheless it continues to be perpetuated to this present day. The only difference between the heresy then and the heresy now is that the ritual has been changed from circumcision to baptism. In many of the

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churches under the canopy of Christianity, this is infant baptism. Thus our Lord could say to both the Jews (when they were the custodians of the truth) and to the church (in this age in which it is the custodian of the truth), *This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me* (Mark 7:6).

It can be seen, then, that the masses within the churches have departed from the truth for the same reason that Israel departed from the truth: *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Mark 7:7). Towards the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he had the opportunity to speak to the elders at Ephesus and to advise them of certain negative influences that would come upon them:

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:25-31)

In addition to this warning, a careful reading of the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, the writer to the Hebrews, and Jude reveals that the early church was confronted with *the leaven* that the woman hid in three measures of meal; and as Paul told the Ephesian elders, these doctrinal errors would come upon the churches from both external and internal sources. There would be false prophets who would come to them in sheep's clothing, and there would be ambitious men who would arise from within the churches to enter the ministry as a profession, and not as a calling.

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Our Lord called these shepherds *hirelings*. Hirelings have no interest in the sheep, other than using them to provide for themselves (John 10:12-13). Consequently hirelings put the emphasis upon virtually everything but the truth of the Word of God to accomplish this end. This means they have little time or interest in studying *to show [themselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Since they are not called of God, they could not discern the Word of God even if they studied. Consequently their congregations receive little or no truth. Further, these hirelings have been trained (in Bible Colleges and Seminaries) to appeal to the flesh. They do this in the name of spirituality, and this mock spirituality has produced many numerical and financial success stories, which are self-justifying to the institutions that trained them, to the hirelings, and to their congregations. It enables them to boast, along with the church at Laodicea: *[We are] rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; [but, sadly, they do not know that they are] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (Revelation 3:17).

Despite the spiritual dearth, there are genuine believers (as we have seen in the churches in the second and third chapters of the Revelation) within these congregations. Even so these believers receive virtually nothing from the ministry to help them grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Remember that in our Lord's parable of the tares among the wheat, we learned that the tares were sown among the wheat while men slept. The men that slept, of necessity, must be those who were in charge of sowing the seed. In the church this is the pastor-teacher. So, as with a shepherd and his sheep, the flock is endangered when the shepherd is not vigilant in feeding and caring for the sheep. This neglect

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makes the sheep an easy prey for wolves in sheep's clothing.

We have seen that the church has one mission in the world. It has been given the authority of Jesus Christ to go into all of the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). The church is to preach with authority because *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (II Timothy 3:16-17). Despite the authority of the Word of God, and as with the temptation of Eve in the garden, if the Word of God can be undermined by crafty men (as it was by the serpent), churches are set adrift like ships without anchors. Thus, in this day of the great apostasy, many churches have fallen into this condition because their pastors have failed to do what Paul instructed Timothy to do:

I charge thee therefore [because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God] before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (II Timothy 4:1-5, emphasis mine)

The failure to endure sound doctrine came upon the churches rather quickly, because the five negative influences we have seen (in the parables of the tares among the wheat, the mustard seed that grew into a tree, the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal, the treasure hid in the field, and a net cast into the sea that gathered of every kind) had their effects upon the churches. Consequently the churches, like the nation of Israel before them, began to give mere lip service to God. They began to move away from the autonomy and authority of the local church (centered in the Word of God) to a centralized ecclesiastical authority, *after the commandments*

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and doctrines of men (Colossians 2:20-23).

This, ironically, began with proper motivation. The poorer churches received help from their more affluent sister churches, as with the offering Paul gathered for the church at Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8:1-15); but with the deaths of properly motivated leaders (like the apostles), and the base nature of hirelings who arose within the churches, the autonomy and authority of many of the poorer churches were soon usurped. This was accomplished by an ecclesiastical body that was given the responsibility to distribute assets to the poorer churches, but at the cost of their independence. Those churches and individuals who would not relinquish the autonomy of the local church and the authority of the Word of God were ultimately persecuted by the great whore (Revelation 17:6): *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (Revelation 17:5).

The Scriptures give us the identity of this woman with certainty: *And the woman that thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth* (Revelation 17:18). That city was Rome. In order to maintain a Biblical perspective, it is important to understand that Rome has not ceased to exist as a world power, as is taught by secular historians. The power that Rome has today is different than the political power she had for about five hundred years. This power began to change from a political power to a religious power during the reign of Constantine, when Christianity became the state religion of Rome. This merger of church and state produced the Roman Catholic Church (even though the Roman Church claims an earlier beginning, with a succession of Popes all the way back to the apostle Peter). This is not an introspective attack upon the Roman Church, but a declaration of the truth we have learned from the Revelation and from

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream: the fourth world empire will be the world-dominating power during the reign of the antichrist (Revelations 17:11) unto the second coming of Jesus Christ.

In our chapter on *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, we learned that he had a dream which he promptly forgot. His wise men could not tell him the dream or the interpretation, so Nebuchadnezzar sentenced them all to death. When Daniel found that he and his companions were also under the sentence of death, he questioned why the decree from the king was so hasty (Daniel 2:15). Then Daniel gained time from Nebuchadnezzar to petition the Lord about the dream, and the secret was made known unto him in a night vision (Daniel 2:19). Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great image with an head of gold, breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron, with feet of iron and of clay (Daniel 2:32-33). Daniel told the king: *Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Daniel 2:34-35).

The interpretation of the dream that was given to Daniel, as well as other revelations in the book of Daniel (in the light of history), have revealed that the gold was Babylon, the silver was Persia, the brass was Greece, and the iron and clay are Rome. The dream declared that during the fourth world empire a stone would be cut out without hands. This speaks of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ during the reign of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-7), early in the empire. However at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will judge the fourth world empire

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and its leaders, the antichrist and the false prophet (Revelation 13:11-12), as well as the apostate churches, when He smites the image of the beast upon its feet. After that, the stone will become a mountain and fill the whole earth, which speaks of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen [Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius], and one is [Nero], and the other [Vespasian] is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he [the antichrist] is the eighth, and is of the seven [i.e., of the same empire], and goeth into perdition. (Revelation 17:9-11)

We have quoted the above text again to emphasize that the study of Roman history, from the secular point of view, provides little understanding of the history of Rome, from the Scriptural point of view. This is evident in this quotation because secular history does not begin the Roman Empire with Julius Caesar. It begins it with Augustus. The reason for this is the difference in the political structure of Rome under Augustus. Despite this change, the empire was still Roman, whether it was a republic ruled by a dictator or a republic ruled by an emperor. Further, while secular history recognizes the division of the Roman Empire into its two legs during the reign of Diocletian (286 A.D.), it does not recognize that the fourth world empire exist today. Secular history tells us that the Western Empire died unofficially in 480 A.D. with the death of Julius Nepos, and the Eastern Empire continued until 1453 A.D., when it was captured by the Ottoman Empire. (Western Roman Empire, Wikipedia)

Yet, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream (given to him by God), there were to be four world empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, successively, unto the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Since God cannot lie, there is no contradiction nor failure of

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this prophecy. Rather, there is a difference in perspective. The academic world of the historian divides history into neat packages based upon similarities of government. Consequently it does not count the rise of the Roman Catholic Church in the West, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East (except within the dates of 480 in the West and 1453 in the East) to be a continuation of the history of Rome. Neither does it count the fracturing of the Roman Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation movement (into the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream), after the political fall of Rome, to be a part of the Roman Empire, but God does:

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with [brittle] clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with [brittle] clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and *the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.* (Daniel 2:40-45, emphasis mine)

The history of the Roman Empire, according to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is different than the perspective of secular history. The Biblical view, as we have already seen, counts the political and religious aspects of Rome to be one empire. Thus as the Roman Empire began to decline politically, it ascended religiously. It later separated into the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East. These are, from the Biblical perspective, the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Then as the history of the Roman

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Church unfolded, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it fractured (brittle clay) into the ten toes of the Protestant Reformation movement. This separation has remained pretty much in tack until the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the advent of interdenominationalism. During this period of time the net was let down into the sea with the cooperation of virtually all of the denominations under the canopy of Christianity. Then at about the midpoint of the twentieth century, the ecumenical movement took off with great impetus with the ministries of men like Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Billy Graham.

Bishop Sheen could be properly called the first *televangelist*, while Billy Graham is the best known mass-evangelist of the twentieth century. At the beginning, Billy Graham did not use the medium of television, but confined his ministry to city-wide meetings in auditoriums and stadiums. It wasn't long (1955), however, before he saw the distinct advantage of adding television coverage of his meetings. This greatly expanded his ministry and his popularity. Both of these men were ecumenical in their approach, and so was Pope John Paul II.

Bishop Sheen's broadcasts bridged ecclesiastical barriers, and Billy Graham insisted upon the cooperation of the various Christian denominations in his evangelistic campaigns. These two men, Sheen and Graham, met on a train ride from Washington to New York and became good friends. As Billy Graham's popularity increased, he was invited by Cardinal Wojtyla to preach in Krakow cathedral. They later met, after the Cardinal became Pope John Paul II, and found they were in agreement about reuniting all of Christendom. Thus, through the efforts of these men and many others, the toes that had fractured from the empire during the Protestant Reformation movement began an overt campaign to reunite with Rome.

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Although Billy Graham comes from a typical Southern Baptist background, which traditionally has not been sympathetic to Catholicism, he has broken that mould. Billy has always respected people for what they are. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that he had a great respect for Pope John Paul II.

Their contact began in 1978, when Cardinal Wojtyla invited Graham to preach in Krakow cathedral. They didn't actually meet on that occasion, however; Pope John Paul I had died suddenly, and the Cardinal had to leave for Rome and the consistory which would eventually elect him to the See of Peter. Graham preached also at the great Marian shrine of Czestochowa, and is on record as being deeply impressed by the faith of Catholic Poland.

Three years later, Billy did indeed meet the Pope, this time in Rome. He found him extremely cordial and very interested in his ministry. 'After only a few minutes,' he wrote, 'I felt as if we had known each other for many years.' The two men of God exchanged gifts. Graham gave the Pope a woodcarving of a shepherd with his sheep, crafted by a North Carolina artist.

They recalled together the words of Jesus: 'I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own and my sheep know me ... There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too' (John 10:14-16). In turn, the Pope gave Graham a medallion of his papacy and several beautifully bound volumes. (Irish Jesuit publication: *The Messenger*, June 2006, "Just as I am: Billy Graham")

During the nineteenth century, the Young Men's Christian Association (1844) and the Young Women's Christian Association (1855) were formed. The formation of these organizations set the mood for a modern ecumenical movement. The movement gained some impetus in 1910 with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In 1948 the World Council of Churches was formed, and 1950 saw the formation of the National Council of Churches. Each of these organizations was ecumenical in scope. Thus they minimized doctrine and maximized cooperation between the various Christian denominations.

From about the middle of the twentieth century to the present, then, there has been an overt movement to bring all of the denominations of Christianity together, as was suggested in the conversation between Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II. However, if we consider the context of our Lord's statement about *sheep* and *other sheep* mentioned in the Irish Jesuit article about

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Billy Graham, our Lord was speaking to Jews. Thus His reference to His *sheep* was a reference to redeemed Jews of that era, while the reference to the *other sheep* of His statement was a reference to those who would be redeemed during the church age. This means that His statement had nothing to do with an ecumenical movement to reunite the Roman Church with Protestant churches, even though this was the assumed interpretation applied by both Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II to our Lord's remarks.

Unity around the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is one thing, but unity for the sake of unity is quite another. Remember, John wrote: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world* (I John 4:1-3). Since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and since God cannot deny Himself, the unity of the Spirit must be an agreement with God's Word (specifically about the Person and the work of Jesus Christ), rightly divided.

Even so, fuel was added to the ecumenical movement throughout the twentieth century with many outside of the church organizations being formed. Demos Shakarian, who worked closely with Oral Roberts, formed the Full Gospel Christian Business Men's Association in 1951. This interdenominational organization now has branches in 132 countries of the world. In 1990 The Promise Keepers was founded by the former head football coach of the University of Colorado at Boulder, Bill McCartney. The core beliefs of the organization are outlined in *Seven Promises*,

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which are embraced by its membership. The sixth promise is significant. It states: *A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity.* This seems a noble concept, but is this unity the Biblical *unity of the Spirit*?

The *unity of the Spirit* is a wonderful thing, but this Promise Keeper's promise has nothing to do with the unity of the Spirit. In practice, as demonstrated in their meetings, one Promise Keeper may ask another Promise Keeper, *Are you a Christian?* If the response is, *Yes.* Then he will say, *I, too, am a Christian and that makes us brothers.* Is this naivety or spiritual stupidity, or is it both? Given all of the false teaching under the canopy of Christianity, how could such a statement identify *wolves in sheep's clothing*, or how could it identify those from the midst of the churches that would arise, *speaking perverse things*? Stating that one is a Christian does not make it necessarily so.

To be a Christian, one must be a new creation in Christ Jesus. He must have had the preaching of the Word of God quickened to his heart by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:5), and thus be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). He must be in agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus have his trust in the Lord, and not in works of righteousness which he has done. Yet the majority of people who call themselves Christians know nothing of these things. The majority were baptized as infants, confirmed when they reached puberty, and believe they must keep themselves in a right relationship with God by works of righteousness which they have done, which requires keeping the law of Moses. These misconceptions must be compared with the Word of God:

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For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)

And:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of [the] disobedience: among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:2-9)

And also:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20)... To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:26-28)

And to show the purpose of the law:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* (Galatians 3:21-25, emphasis mine)

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As we come to the description of the woman in the seventeenth chapter of the book of the Revelation, we must realize that by a proper interpretation of the Scriptures, this woman would not be recognized by the world as a harlot, nor would the world recognize her offsprings, the ten horns, as harlots. The world would call them Christians. So how would The Promise Keeper's assessment of a Christian work with this woman and her offsprings?

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Revelation 17:1-5)

This woman is referred to as a whore. She is a whore in the sense that Israel was a whore. God likened Israel's worship of the false gods of the land to the activities of an unfaithful wife (Hosea 3:1); and this woman's worship has been diverted from the Person and work of Jesus Christ to the worship of the works of her own hands, by *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, the devil's lie. She sits upon many waters; therefore her reign is world-wide (Revelation 17:15). Her reign is so inclusive that the kings of the earth have worshipped falsely with her, and the inhabitants of the earth are in a stupor because of her false doctrines.

In the parable of the mustard seed, we saw that the seed grew into a tree. Its growth was so great that the birds of the air lodged in its uppermost branches and enjoyed its shade. By our Lord's interpretation, the birds were the devil. This is reversed in the description of the woman;

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the whore is sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, which is the devil who has enthroned her. The fruits of the other gospel which she has preached have made her rich, like the church at Laodicea, so that she is arrayed in costly materials, with jewels, and with a cup of gold.

This woman is described as having seven heads and ten horns. We have seen that the seven heads refer to the seven rulers of Rome who reigned until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and we have seen that the eighth ruler will be the antichrist. Thus the harlot Babylon is Rome (in the final stages of the empire) before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. The ten horns are the churches that fractured from the Roman church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but through the apostasy of the last days and the ecumenical movement, they have reunited. This union will be short-lived, for when we come to the end of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, we shall see that the ten horns will be used of God to judge the whore, when they shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire (Revelation 17:16-17).

Nevertheless at the beginning of the great tribulation period, the ecclesiastical head of this empire, along with the ten horns, will testify to the world that the antichrist is the Christ. They will be thoroughly convinced that this is true; and since all of the redeemed will have been raised in the first resurrection, there will not be anyone upon this earth who can discern the truth of the Word of God and therefore refute the authority of the whore and her apostate associates. Thus, with the *signs and lying wonders* that will be performed by the antichrist, the deception will be complete (II Thessalonians 2:9-10). It will go unchecked until our Lord brings the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses to mount Zion to testify to the truth during the great tribulation period.

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John testified that he saw *the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the [witnesses] of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great [wonder]. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns* (Revelation 17:6-7). The history of the Roman Church has indeed been a bloody one (See *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, The John C. Winston Company, 1926.) She has put to death many who have testified to the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and also, by federal headship, she is counted to have had a part in the deaths of the Old Testament saints who stood for the truth of the Word of God.

We stated earlier that as the churches were made subject to a centralized authority, that authority persecuted those who would not submit. Thus, as the Lord preserved a remnant in Israel in the Old Testament era, He has also preserved a remnant from the first century to the present, so that in the midst of the apostasy of the last days, our Lord still has a faithful remnant who shall testify to the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a lost world. This remnant will be preserved unto the day when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words* (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and

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the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. (Revelation 17:8-18)

In our chapter on *The Revelation of the Antichrist*, we stated that we believe that the antichrist will be Judas Iscariot. We believe this because Paul referred to the antichrist as the son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:3), and our Lord also called Judas Iscariot the son of perdition (John 17:12). After our Lord's discourse on the bread of life, He referred to Judas as the devil (John 6:70), and the description of the antichrist in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation (13:1) is precisely the same as the description of the devil in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation (12:3). These facts, along with the fact that in this Scripture the antichrist is described as the one who *was, and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit*, seem to require the preexistence of someone like Judas Iscariot to be the antichrist. Further, Judas was fully capable of deceiving the eleven into thinking that he was one of them. This was made evident when our Lord told the twelve that one of them would betray Him. They all said, *Is it I?* No one but the Lord knew it was Judas. Consequently there was nothing obviously different about the ministry of Judas than the ministries of the eleven. It should not seem strange then that the antichrist will have the ability

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to deceive the world with his *signs and lying wonders* (II Thessalonians 2:9-10).

This brings us to the ten horns who, along with the false prophet, shall attest that the antichrist is the Christ. We have identified the horns as the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which fractured from the Roman Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation movement. However in 1969, Hal Lindsey, in his book *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, identified these ten horns as the European Common Market nations. We mean no disrespect to Mr. Lindsey, but the Common Market nations do not fit the description of the horns in our text. The Common Market nations exist as nations now, but our text states, *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast* (Revelation 17:12, emphasis mine).

The devil must mimic the truth of the Word of God in order to add credibility to the things that he does in this world. Consequently, in the realm of the truth, we have a triune Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and in the realm of the lie, we also have a trinity: with the devil in the place of God, the antichrist in the place of Christ, and another spirit in the place of the Holy Spirit. Further, in the realm of the truth, we have the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and in the realm of the lie, we have another gospel, based upon the works of man, which had its origin in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12).

Our Lord promised a rulership to those who live their lives by faith (Matthew 25:21). Thus, in the fourth chapter of the Revelation, we saw the twenty-four elders with crowns upon their heads, which they had received at the judgment seat of Christ. Even so they removed their

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crowns and cast them before the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He alone is worthy to reign (Revelation 4:10-11). In contrast to this, and by way of the lie of the devil usurping the truth of God, the ten horns will receive the power to reign as kings one hour with the beast; and, according to our text, they will give *their kingdom unto the beast* (Revelation 17:17). These parallels are not in Scripture by accident: for they reveal the sham nature of the devil, the antichrist, and the other spirit. They show the subtle and deceptive nature of the devil's lie.

So the unity that we have seen between the Roman Church and the Protestant churches of the last days is a sham unity. It will not last. It is as false as everything else that the devil has produced. Thus, at a point in time, during the reign of the antichrist: *the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled* (Revelation 17:16-17). This action by the ten horns will probably occur around the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel, when the focus will be shifted from Rome to Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-21).

After the reign of the antichrist has been completed, at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, and during the battle of Armageddon: *the ten horns shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful* (Revelation 17:14). Thus the fourth world empire will end in judgment when the Lord smites it upon its feet.

Ironically the church in Rome was once the home of many faithful believers in Jesus

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Christ, but as the influences of five of the seven parables of our Lord gained impetus, the church at Rome grew into a tree that lodged the devil in its uppermost branches. This influence was so overwhelming, that rather than promoting the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ as it once had, this church became *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (Revelation 17:5).

The history of this city-state certainly befits its Biblical name, Babylon. This name has its roots in the Hebrew word *Babel*, which means: *confusion*. It was first used in Scripture to describe the kingdom of Nimrod (Genesis 10:9-10), a great-grandson of Noah:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

Confusion reigned because of rebellion against the revealed will of God. Today, confusion reigns for the same reason, and the worst possible confusion is that which reigns in the name of the truth. The church at Rome was once a bastion of the truth, but it has become the world-dominating center of the lie of the devil, along with the ten horns that have reunited with her. This is confusion. Thus she truly is *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF*

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HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Revelation 17:5).