

The Collapse of Satan's Church

Revelation 17:1-18 (NKJV) – Bible passage [my explanatory notes]

1) The **Control** of Satan's Church (Rev. 17:1-2)

¹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls [from Ch. 16] came and talked with me [John], saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** [represents the false religious system, unfaithful to God, and I'm referring to it as "Satan's church."] who sits on many waters, [verse 15 explains the "many waters" symbolize peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues – this represents how worldwide this religious system is.]

² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." [The "kings of the earth" (rulers) and "inhabitants of the earth" (people) are entangled in this false system, engaging in spiritual unfaithfulness to God. Fornication here symbolizes rebellion, idolatry, and false worship. The system's teachings intoxicate the world, leading people away from God.]

2) The **Characteristics** of Satan's Church (Rev. 17:3-6)

³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. [meaning "desert" which symbolizes the spiritual barrenness of this false religion.] And **I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast** which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. [The woman (false religion) is sitting on a scarlet beast (the Antichrist). The beast's "names of blasphemy" reveal its opposition to God. The seven heads and ten horns refer to the Antichrist's empire.]

⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet [represents royalty and luxury], and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls [represents wealth and riches], having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations [symbolizing the deceptive nature of this system: outwardly beautiful, but inwardly corrupt, vile, and opposed to God] and the filthiness of her fornication. [spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry.]

⁵ And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH** [This name shows that this false religion can point back to Babylon, Her name reveals her identity as "Babylon the Great," the source of all false religions throughout history. She is the "mother" of spiritual harlotry and idolatry, tracing back to Babel in Genesis 11. This false religion opposes God and spreads spiritual corruption globally.]

⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. [This symbolizes her persecution of believers. This religious system will be responsible for the deaths of countless saints and martyrs who remain faithful to Jesus during the Tribulation.] And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. [John is shocked at the corruption and power of this system, so different from the humble New Testament church he knew.]

3) The **Collapse** of Satan's Church (Rev. 17:7-18)

⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? 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. [The angel explains the meaning of the woman (false religion) and the beast (Antichrist). The woman rides the beast, symbolizing their temporary alliance and mutual benefit.]

⁸ The beast that you saw **was, and is not, and will ascend** out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. [The Antichrist "was, and is not, and will ascend" refers to his apparent death and resurrection during the Tribulation, which will amaze unbelievers. However, his destiny is destruction ("perdition"). Only those whose names are **not in the Book of Life** will worship him, showing their spiritual lostness.]

⁹ "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. [The seven mountains are commonly understood to refer to Rome, famously built on seven hills, which are: Aventine Hill (Aventinus), Caelian Hill (Caelius), Capitoline Hill (Capitolium), Esquiline Hill (Esquilinus), Palatine Hill (Palatinus), Quirinal Hill (Quirinalis), and Viminal Hill (Viminalis). This suggests that **the false religious system will have a connection to Rome.**]

¹⁰ There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. [The seven kings represent seven world empires with a particular relationship to Israel. Five empires had already fallen by John's time (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece). The sixth (Rome) existed during John's time, and the seventh (the Antichrist's kingdom) is still to come.]

¹¹ The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. [The Antichrist is the leader of the seventh kingdom, but after his apparent resurrection, he will establish a global empire, becoming the eighth kingdom. However, his ultimate destiny is destruction.]

¹² "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

¹³ These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. [The ten horns symbolize ten rulers who will align with the Antichrist. Their reign will be brief ("one hour"), and they will give their authority to him.]

¹⁴ **These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.** [At the end of the Tribulation, the Antichrist and his allies will wage war against Jesus, but they will be defeated because Jesus is the Lord of lords and King of kings. Believers ("called, chosen, and faithful") will be with Him in victory.]

¹⁵ Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. [The Antichrist and the ten kings will turn against the false religious system, stripping it of power and destroying it completely. This shows the self-serving nature of the political system, which will use religion only as long as it benefits them.]

¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. [Even the actions of the wicked are under God's control. Their rebellion will ultimately accomplish His purposes and fulfill His Word.]

¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city [probably should be understood as Rome] which reigns over the kings of the earth."

Applications for Today:

- 1) **Recognize and avoid false religions and cults today.** Satan will use false religion during the Great Tribulation, but this will be nothing new. Today, satan uses false religions and cults to keep people blind to the truth of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). Be discerning (1 John 4:1) by knowing God's Word.
- 2) **Trust God's sovereignty over history and our lives as well.** He will put it into the hearts of the kings to destroy this false church (verse 17). God's plans and purposes will succeed in the end times. We can also trust Him with the details of our lives as well.
- 3) **Stay close to Jesus.** This chapter expresses a false church that is so loyal to the Antichrist that it is depicted as a woman riding a beast. Could it be said of us that we follow Jesus this close? Mark 12:30-31 says for us to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. How closely do you follow Jesus?