

THE WOMAN ON THE SCARLET BEAST

The fifth and sixth plagues (Rev. 16) are the indictment and judgment of the apocalyptic city of Babylon. Under those plagues we were given a brief synopsis of what was to come upon the ecumenical movement of spiritualism, the papacy, and apostate Protestantism.

In Revelation 17 we are given a closer view, with more detail, of these plagues poured out upon the adulterous church. One of the plague-bearing angels shows John the crimes of “the great whore” (Rev. 17:3-6). It “constitutes Heaven’s bill of indictment, a declaration of why the divine sentence is to be pronounced upon her.”¹ Beginning in verse 7 the angels says to John, “I will tell thee” the sentence and the means of its execution.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” Revelation 17:1.

The church is the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul gave thanks for the church in Rome, in the beginning, when it was pre-eminently a church of Christ. He wrote of her faith, that it was “spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). She was clothed with the beautiful garments of salvation and the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Thus she had the power of God and the Lord presented her before the eyes of all the nations. The beauty of the Lord was upon her and she prospered.

But she was not satisfied with the exaltation that the Lord gave her, which could only remain through humility and purity of faith. The church became haughty and exalted herself. “Instead of trusting in him for her beauty, she trusted in herself.”² When this took place she no longer magnified her Husband, the Lord, but herself. She drew disciples to herself instead of Christ. Thus the mystery of God and godliness was turned into the mystery of self and selfishness, which is the mystery of iniquity. For this she was “spoken of throughout the

¹ *The Book of Revelation*, Vol. II (Harrah, Oklahoma: Academy Enterprises, Inc., 1980), p. 1057.

² A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message. What Is It as to Babylon the Mother?” *The Advent Review And Sabbath Herald* 77, 7 (February 13, 1900), p. 104.

whole world” for over nineteen hundred years oppressing the peoples of the earth as she sits “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.” Revelation 17:2.

Husbands, if another man should interpose himself between you and your wife and make advances toward her, what would be your reaction? If he should intrude himself upon her by asking her out for dinner, and suggesting doubt about the fealty of your affections, and his sentiments of love toward her, this would soon develop into a full-blown adulterous affair. It would be treason to her own husband and apostasy from her marriage vows.

In the case of the church of Rome’s treason from Christ and fornication with “the kings of the earth,” which are its nations and political entities, it could only produce unfaithfulness and immorality.

The faith and morals that come from this unholy union of an adulterous church with the state are described as “wine” which stupefies and intoxicates “the inhabitants of the earth.” “This cup of intoxication which she presents to the world represents the false doctrines that she has accepted as the result of her unlawful connection with the great ones of the earth.”³ From its illicit connections with paganism the church has derived its core teachings.

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” Revelation 17:3.

The Bishop of Rome claims to be the head of the church. The Council of Florence (1439) decreed: “We define that the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, the *head of the whole church*, the father and doctor of all Christians; and we declare that to him, in the person of blessed Peter, was given, by Jesus Christ our Saviour, full power to feed, rule, and govern the universal church.”⁴ The church of Rome claims to be “the bride of Christ.” She has accepted another in the place of her husband, but she openly boasts of “the true vicar” being the representative of her husband.

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden

³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 388.

⁴ Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 154.

cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” Revelation 17:4.

“Still trusting in her own beauty, and her own bedecking of herself with silk and gold and precious stones and pearls, and holding in her hand the proffer of rich gifts to any lover that would receive her immodest advances and form an alliance with her, she finally succeeded, through Constantine, in gaining imperial favor, and in forming an adulterous connection with an earthly lord. The now unholy church formed an unholy connection with the unholy state.”⁵

The intoxicating wine that fills the golden cup includes the immortality of the soul inherited from paganism. This teaching is a doctrine of devils taught by the serpent in the Garden of Eden to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” It is very pleasing to man in that it makes him a “god.” Death does not bring cessation to the soul, but it either goes to heaven or to hell. For those who cannot accept that a loving God would torment eternal souls in hell they believe in universalism, i.e., everybody will be saved in the end.

The doctrine of original sin teaches that everyone sinned in the soul of Adam which contained all the souls of his descendants. As his eternal soul was individualized they were so contaminated with sin in total depravity that God predestinated some souls to eternal life and others to eternal damnation.

It is impossible for one who believes in the immortality of the soul to understand Jesus’ cross. His death was separation from God and the second death.

Virtually every religion is permeated with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Revelation 17:5.

The ancient meaning of “Babel,” from which comes “Babylon,” was “Gate of God;” and because of the pride and exaltation of those who were of this “Babel,” confusion overtook them; and that which originally meant “Gate of God,” thenceforth meant only “confusion.”

Now the church is “the body of Christ” in the world; and he says: “I am the way,” “I am the door.” The church of Christ is the Lord’s appointed agency through which he would call men unto himself, that they may find in him deliverance from this present evil world. The

⁵ Jones, *Ibid.*

church is therefore indeed and in truth the “Gate of God” to mankind; and the faith of Jesus is that which gives access through this gate, to all the fullness of God.

If the church should become proud and self-exalted, and thus there come a confusion of principles and relationships, it would follow that that which at first was “Gate of God” would become confusion. What, then, says the Scripture?—It tells that there would come “a falling away” from the truth of the gospel; that there would come a self-exaltation in the church, through men arising, from the very midst of her trusted ones, who would speak “perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” 2 Thess. 2: 3, 4; Acts 20:28, 30.

Babylon refers to Rome. Cardinal Gibbons wrote a standard work of the Church of Rome. He says, “Babylon, from which Peter addressed his first epistle, is understood by learned annotators, Protestant and Catholic, to refer to Rome.”⁶

The harlot daughters of this mother Babylon are the various religious bodies that constitute apostate Protestantism.⁷

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.” Revelation 17:6.

Babylon is “drunken” with the blood of martyrs in all ages, but in a more immediate sense with that of martyrs and prospective martyrs in the closing scenes of earth’s history. God holds Babylon accountable for the blood of those whose death she has decreed but whom she is prevented from slaying.⁸

“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 17:7.

⁶ Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 131.

⁷ “By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world.” Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 382.

⁸ “The papacy that Protestants are now so ready to honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up, at the peril of their lives, to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty and slew the saints of the Most High.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 571.

John is now given an explanation of the prophetic vision. "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman." The sentence decreed upon the woman is to be executed under the seventh plague.

The woman, Babylon, the church of Rome, sits upon a beast which was Rome.

"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." Revelation 17:8.

Rome in its pagan form "was" a persecuting power to the people of God in the days of John. He sat on the Isle of Patmos in exile because of Rome's persecutions. But the empire was nominally converted to Christianity. There was a transition from paganism to the religion of Christ, during which time it lost its ferocious and persecuting character, and then it could be said of the beast, that it was not. Time passed on, and it degenerated into popery, and again assumed its bloodthirsty and oppressive character, and then constituted the beast that "yet is," or in John's day was to be.

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." Revelation 17:9.

The seven heads are explained to be seven mountains. And then—

"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." Revelation 17:10.

The seven heads and ten horns are always associated with symbols that are identified with Rome. The "great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns" that was ready to devour the woman's child has to be Rome (Rev. 12:3, 4). The leopard beast arising out of the sea "having seven heads and ten horns" is papal Rome to whom "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev. 13:1, 2). "Seven heads must signify seven governments or forms of government. We do not meet with seven heads associated together in one symbol till we come to the dragon, which represents the fourth of the great prophetic empires; that is, Rome. The conclusion is that these heads, whatever they represent, do not exist till we reach

Rome; for the head as a symbol could not represent a government which preceded that symbol.”⁹

The seven mountains are seven kings or forms of government. Five are fallen, says the angel, or passed away; one is; the sixth was then reigning; another was to come, and continue a short space; and when the beast reappeared in its bloody and persecuting character, it was to be under the eighth form of government which was to continue till the beast went into perdition. The seven forms of government that have existed in the Roman empire are: 1. Kings. 2. Consuls. 3. Decemvirs. 4. Dictators. 5. Triumvirs. 6. Imperial; and 7. Papal. Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Dictators, and Triumvirs, had passed away in John’s day. He was living under the Imperial form. Two more were to arise after his time. One was to continue a short space, and hence is not usually reckoned among the heads; while the last, which is usually denominated the seventh, is in reality the eighth. The head which was to succeed the imperial and continue a *short space* could not be the papal; for that has continued longer than all the rest put together. The papal head is the eighth, and that a head of short continuance intervened between the imperial and papal. After the imperial form had been abolished, there was a ruler who for the space of about 60 years governed Rome under the title of the “Exarchate of Ravenna.”¹⁰ “The short-lived government of Rome by the “Exarch of Ravenna” is alluded to in verse 10, but is immediately passed over, and the prophecy goes on to the next, or papal phase, which, though technically the eighth, is reckoned as the seventh.”¹¹

“And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” Revelation 17:11.

“The third phase of the beast that was, and is not, and yet is, is the Roman power under the rule of the papacy, and in this form ascends out of the bottomless pit, or bases its power on pretensions which have no foundation but error and paganism.”¹² It was in its full-blown power from 538 to 1798 A.D., for 1,260 years. “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death” (Rev. 13:3). This was the seventh head that was wounded in 1798 when the pope was taken

⁹ Uriah Smith, “The ‘Heads,’ of Rev. 17:3, Successive,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 65, 15 (April 10, 1888), p. 232.

¹⁰ James White, “Thoughts on the Revelation. Chapter XVII,” *RH* (December 9, 1862), p. 12.

¹¹ Smith, *Ibid.*

¹² White, *Ibid.*

prisoner by the French General Berthier at the command of Napoleon. "And his deadly wound was healed" (Rev. 13:3). This is the eighth head which is really the seventh—papal Rome.

"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.

The ten horns that arose out of the Roman empire continue to this day in their descendants and in the near future will unite with Babylon, for an indefinite period of time ("one hour"), to make "war with the Lamb, and the world is marshaled to the battle of the great day by this union of Church and State."¹³

"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." Revelation 17:13.

"There will be a universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy of Satan's forces. . . . In the warfare to be waged in the last days there will be united, in opposition to God's people, all the corrupt powers that have apostatized from allegiance to the law of Jehovah."¹⁴

"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." Revelation 17: 14.

This is the battle of Armageddon. "Christ will overcome them, not in the capacity of a fierce lion, but in His character of a Lamb. He has never conquered by force. In the last great meeting with the lost when God gathers all the inhabitants of the world before His throne, He will cause to pass before their eyes as in a giant cinema the scenes of Christ's life on earth, His loving ministry, His miracles of healing, His rejection by those He came to save, and His crucifixion on the tree.

"Every lost soul will then see that he has in fact taken a mysterious but very real part in the murder of the Lamb of God. The cross will be seen as an event of timeless meaning. Men and women will see that by their choice to live a life of sin, they have joined in driving the nails through His hands and feet. Each one will then understand the true nature of his life-long rebellion against the Lamb. He will see that by a life devoted to self, he has prepared himself at last to go to war against the Lamb and against the righteous government of God.

¹³ S. N. Haskell, "Revelation 17," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 78, 13 (March 26, 1891), p. 199.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, pp. 392, 393.

“The sight of the cross of Christ in its true meaning will bring a sharp pain of conviction to the lost. They will condemn themselves. They cannot bring themselves to look into the face of the Redeemer whom they have spurned and rejected. The punishment that Love inflicts upon its rejecters is the most painful that there can be!”¹⁵

“They that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Our attention is called to the Bible’s teaching about predestination. We read that “whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Romans 8:29. Our Calvinist friends understand God’s predestination to mean that before the creation of intelligent beings on this earth, God chose to favor certain ones with salvation and others He chose for eternal hell fire. There is no Seventh-day Adventist who would follow such an interpretation of God’s predestination.

Some understand the following words to pertain to believers only: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Romans 8:30. If God’s predestination here pertains only to believers and not to unbelievers, then God has singled out only those who respond by faith to His offer of salvation as eligible for justification and glorification.

But the Father, without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falls to the ground, knew from ancient times every son and daughter of Adam who would ever live upon His earth. And “whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Rom. 8:29. So that instead of predestinating certain ones who would believe only to be saved, God predestinated to eternal life every one who was to be born.¹⁶

“Whom He did predestinate.”¹⁷ This is completed action. This predestination is in Christ. “In Christ we have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Robert J. Wieland, *The Gospel in Revelation*, p. 137.

¹⁶ W. T. B., “The Election of Grace,” *The Present Truth* 17, 9 (February 28, 1901), p 132.

¹⁷ “He did not merely in His premundane decree, acquit them of sin, but also *clothe them with glory*: the aorist *edozaren* being used, as the other aorists, to imply the completion in the divine counsel of all these, which are to us, in the state of time, so many successive steps,—simultaneously and irrevocably.” Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament, Vol. II*, (Rivingtons: London, 1886), p. 599.

“Them He also called.” “All men are called to that which God has prepared for them.”¹⁹ God’s gift to every one who has been born would not be well-meant unless His call was particular to each individual. Calling involves conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Surely the Lord leaves no one who has ever been born out of this important step of conversion. “The call of God is addressed to every man individually.”²¹ “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” Isa. 43:1.

“Them He also justified.” This is past action on God’s part. Every one has been given the gift of justification of life. But he continues further by saying, “them He also glorified.” How can the unbelieving be said to be glorified? In the same sense that Paul said his unbelieving fellow Jews—“kinsmen according to the flesh”—“who are Israelites” pertained “the adoption, and the glory” (Rom. 9:4). Glorification is the change that comes when Jesus returns and bestows immortality upon mortal flesh and we are no more subject to temptation. In Christ the unbelieving person has justification and glorification.

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Revelation 17:15.

The apostate church of Rome derives her power from “the kings of the earth,” and she uses it to subject all the peoples of the earth in worshiping her.

“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.” Revelation 17:16.

The powers that be which have given their support to the papacy in plotting to slay the saints will be overcome by the Lamb. They will realize that she has deceived them.²²

¹⁸ W. T. B., “The Election of Grace,” *The Present Truth* 17, 9 (February 28, 1901), p. 132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ “Calling is the drawing of the sinner to Christ, and it is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, convicting of sin, and inviting to repentance.” Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 390.

²¹ W. T. B., “The Everlasting Mercy,” *The Present Truth* 17, 10 (March 7, 1901), p. 147.

²² “The people see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest

“For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” Revelation 17:17.

The “ten horns” are authorized by God to execute the divine “judgment” passed upon Babylon for her crimes. They withdraw their support from the whore and turn upon her. This sentence will be meted out to Babylon during the seventh plague.

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Revelation 17:18.

The woman, Babylon, is the vast organized, universal, apostate religious organization which rules the “kings” or governments of the earth. There could be no more complete union of church and state.²³

condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. The multitudes are filled with fury. ‘We are lost!’ they cry, ‘and you are the cause of our ruin;’ and they turn upon the false shepherds. The very ones that once admired them most, will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God’s people are now employed to destroy their enemies.” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 655, 656.

²³ “The state of corruption and apostasy that in the last days would exist in the religious world, was present to the prophet John in the vision of Babylon, ‘that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.’” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 167.