TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE

(The Woman and the Beast [II])

Revelation 17:6-18

Key Verse: 17:17

“For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.”

Again, chapters 17 and 18 are the detailed description of the destruction of Babylon the great. Chapter 17 shows the nature of the spiritual side of the kingdom and God’s judgment upon it, while chapter 18 shows the nature of the material side and God’s judgment upon it. The woman in chapter 17 is more than a false prophet who collaborated with the beast, the Antichrist. The woman is the great city Babylon that rules over the kings of the earth, Babylon the religious empire. It is the religious culture of the world dominated by Satan or the worldwide false system of religion, which is Satanic against God destroying the distinctiveness of Christian faith. The kings of the world and all its people were mustered into one in the name of religion and that one world religion turns into the worship of the beast, the Antichrist, that is the worship of Satan. As we studied, the title written on her forehead well exposes who she is, “Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.” Today in this passage we see the explanation of the mystery of the woman and the beast and the extermination of the mother of prostitutes, Babylon the religious empire in the fulfillment of God’s words.

**First, a mind with wisdom.** Verse 6 says, “I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.” Here we need to understand John’s astonishment. When John saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saint, John was greatly astonished. It implied that many saints were martyred. It is understandable to be hated and killed by unbelieving people of the world. However, when the blood of the saints was shed by so-called believers, it is really terrifying and astonishing. This has been done throughout history, and it will be so to the end of the time. The similar can become the worst, the worst enemy.

Then the angel said to John, “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and the beast she rides that had seven heads and ten horns” (7). When we observe chapter 17, verses 1 and 2 are what the angel said to John, verses 3-6 are what John saw in a desert where the angel carried him away in the Spirit, and verses 7-18 are again what the angel said to John. So John testifies what he saw and heard.

When the angel said, “I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and the beast”, it is likely that the angel understood John’s underlying question in his mind though it was not asked aloud. That is about the beast in relation to the woman, to which the whole world responds, the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the earth.

In verses 1-6 the mystery of the woman, a worldwide religious part of the empire of Satan, was exposed. The angel talks more about it at the last part of this chapter. Now the mystery of the beast is focused.

We know that the beast is really the ultimate and final Antichrist, though there have been many antichrists. He is the most heinous and powerful of all. This one is defined as having seven heads and ten horns in the vision. It was also written in verse 3 that he has seven heads and ten horns, and is covered with blasphemous names. He’s the most incredible human leader ever in terms of his human powers, his human genius. He is Satan’s man, embodying all the powers of human genius and leadership and then eventually energized by evil itself. According to Daniel’s portrait, we can say that he is an intellectual genius, an outstanding orator, a master politician, a commercial wizard, a military mastermind, and a man of unequaled power (7:25; 8:23; 11:36). He is Satan’s supreme human instrument to fight against God. That’s who the beast is. It was also written in 13:1, “He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.” So, the beast having seven heads and ten horns is recorded three times. The explanation of this comes later.

The angel begins the explanation about the beast in verse 8: “The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss, and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.” The expression, “once was, now is not and will come up” is repeated. This is most likely related to the fake resurrection of the beast, which was stressed in chapter 13. 13:3 says, “One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.” And again, verse 12 says, “He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.” Again, it says in verse 14, “He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.” It is written three times concerning his fatal wound being healed. The inhabitant of the earth will be astonished by such a counterfeit resurrection. In order to catapult him out of just the human realm of greatness into the supernatural realm, a fabricated resurrection is played out. When that happens, the Antichrist who was apparently dies and comes back. But when he supposedly is resuscitated and comes back, something is very different about him. Coming out of the Abyss, the abode of demons, he is no longer purely human, but he has now become the dwelling place of some great demon out of the pit. He is then catapulted to another level of operation. He is infused by a demon from hell itself. He is energized into the final form of his satanic enterprise. He thinks he’s now at the apex. He’s now going to take over the world. Now is the moment to capture the world and to defeat Christ. The inhabitants of the earth will be astonished when they see such beast.

The angel mentioned repeatedly that the beast would go to his destruction here in verse 8 and then in verses 11. We see in chapter 19:20 that the beast was thrown alive in the fiery lake of burning sulfur along with the false prophet. However, the inhabitants of the earth will be astonished by the magic power like the counterfeit resurrection, as if such power would continue. Jesus warned about it when he told his disciples concerning the signs of the end time. He said in Matthew 24:23-24, “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Mk. 13:22-23). And Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.”

Then the angel said in verse 9, “This calls for a mind with wisdom.” It had been written in the ending verse of chapter 13, which is about the dragon and the two beasts, which are Satan and the Antichrist and the false prophet. 13:18 says, “This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.” We are living in a computerized digital world. It seems that on account of the digital power one world government control is possible. Anyway, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom according to Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10. Those who fear God can take the warning with wisdom and insight and overcome the worldwide deception, which is coming.

And only those with spiritual minds and spiritual wisdom are going to understand the revelation that is about to follow. Then what is it that we have to understand? The angel says continually in verses 9 and 10, “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.”

Here “seven heads” are “seven mountains” in other translations (ESV. NASB, KJV). The word mountain is orē. It does not necessarily mean a high mountain, a lofty mountain. It can mean a hill. It can mean a small mountain. For example, [Matthew 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%205.1), [Matthew 15:29](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%2015.29), and [John 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%206.15) would use it to indicate a small hill. It was common in the Old Testament that mountain is a symbol of power or a symbol of rule. For example, in Jeremiah 51:25 God speaks against Babylon, “‘I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a burned-out mountain.” Daniel 2:35 says, “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.” So, it will be a good understanding that the mountains here represent seven kingdoms/empires and seven kings inseparable from their kingdoms. In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, which Daniel interpreted, four empires or kingdoms of the world were revealed, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Prior to those, there were two great world empires: Egypt and Assyria. In light of this historical background displayed in the Scripture we can understand verse 10, “Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.” At the time John wrote, Rome was still a great world power. From that standpoint the five kingdoms that have fall were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece. We still now see the influence of Rome. “The other has not yet come.” That is the future kingdom of Satan and Antichrist, the future great world kingdom. We know that kingdoms and kings cannot be separated. They can be synonymous. So it says in verse 9, “but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.” He is the Antichrist king. He must remain for a little while. It is written in Revelation 12:12, “… But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.” And 13:5 says, “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.” We see clearly that the length of his rule is forty-two months, three and half years, the second half of the seven years of tribulation. That’s it.

Then verse 11 says, “The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.” He is going to appear to die and rise again. So, he is both the seventh king and the eighth king who belongs to the seventh as the same figure. And he is going to his destruction. What a mystery of the beast!

Then verse 12 says, “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.” Again, we see this imagery is back in 13:1, “…He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns…” These are ten simultaneous kings. They say that the present world can be divided into ten zones for ease of ruling. It is quite possible that the beast will rule the world having ten sub kings under him. What an interesting expression that “for one hour they will receive authority as kings.” These are kings with one hour of authority, emphasizing the brevity of the authority. We really see the mystery of the beast.

In verse 13, the angel continues, “They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.” Their one purpose is to destroy Christ and prevent the kingdom. So in verse 14, “They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” This war against the Lamb is the battle at Armageddon. We remember in 16:14 that spirits of demons performing miraculous signs go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.” And verse 16 says, “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” This battle ends with the victor of the Lamb and his faithful followers.

May we have a mind with wisdom living his called, chosen and faithful followers!

**Second, to accomplish his purpose (15-18).** In verses 15-16, “Then the angel said to me, ‘The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” What an interesting description concerning the demise of the prostitute! In verse 3, “I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast”, and in verse 7, “ the beast she rides”, or “the beast that carries her.” It is likely that the beast supports her and then overtakes her. When the beast has the whole world under his control through the religious power of the woman the great prostitute, the beast hates the prostitute. After using her fully, the beast brings her to ruin. There will be no more such a thing as religion. The sole religion will be the worship of the beast and the beast will fully exercise his political ruling power over the world. The demise of the prostitute is vividly and emphatically described, “will hate her, bring her to ruin, leave her naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” No more trace of her. There is not a vestige of the former false religious system left on the face of the earth. The world becomes under the complete rule of the beast, the Antichrist. In the end, political Babylon devours religious Babylon. Here we see where the one world religion movement goes. It goes in the end the worship of the beast. One world religion leads to one world government under the Antichrist, which would be then defeated by the Christ at the time of his return.

Why will such a such a thing happen? Verse 17 says, “For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule until God’s words are fulfilled.” God’s purpose is to be accomplished. God uses even evil power to accomplish his purpose. God used Assyria to destroy northern Israel and Babylon to destroy southern Judah when they abandoned the LORD their God and prostituted gods of other nations. Then God used Cyrus king of Persia for his people to return to their own land after 70 years of Babylonian captivity according to his word of promise. God’s purpose overrides Satan’s purpose. There are many examples of this.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Magi from the east came to worship him. The Magi came to Jerusalem, assuming that the king of the Jews would be born there. But king Herod got the correct information regarding the birthplace of the king of the Jews and sent the Magi to Bethlehem, telling them that they would report to him in disguise so that he also could worship the king of the Jews. Surely Herod thought that his plan to get rid of the baby Jesus would succeed. But the Bible says in Matthew 2:12, “Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” Then Herod was furious and attempted to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under. Yet, he could not kill the baby Jesus, because God told Joseph and Mary to escape to Egypt with the baby. Herod’s evil purpose and act only fulfilled God’s words of promises, one of which is “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 11:1). In the book of Esther, Haman, the Agagite, who was second to the king, made a plot to annihilate all the Jews, setting the very day to kill them. In the process, he conspired to hang Mordecai a leader of the Jews on gallows. But the scheme was found by Queen Esther whom Mordecai had raised like his own daughter and known to the king, and Haman was hung on the very gallows he himself built for Mordecai. And the day to annihilate all the Jews turned to the day of the Jews to protect themselves and win a great victory over all their enemies. The Bible says in Esther 9:1, “Now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.” In this way, God not only gave victory to the Jews over evil but also preserved the race to eventually send the Messiah into this world for his ultimate purpose. The greatest example of God’s purpose overriding Satan’s purpose is Christ Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection. The devil used the corrupted religious leaders of that time and the power of Rome to crucify Jesus and let him die on the cross. When Jesus was killed and buried, the devil’s scheme seemed to work completely with great success. But God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ turned the world ruled by Satan upside down. This was a decisive victory over the devil and all his evil scheme. After his resurrection, he was ascended into heaven. According to the expression of Revelation in 12:5, “her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” This one short sentence refers to his resurrection and ascension. Then he will come as King of kings and Lord of lords to completely defeat the devil. God’s purpose never fails, but succeeds no matter what. God’s ultimate purpose is the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

Verses 7 says at the end, “until God’s words are fulfilled.” God’s purpose is accomplished through the fulfillment of his words. So, Jesus said, after telling his disciples about the end time, “Heaven and earth will pass way, but my words will never pass away” (Mt 24:35; Mk 13:31; Lk. 21:33). Those who live by the words of God will have true victories life overcoming the time of seeming failure and defeat time and again. Isaiah 55:8-11 say, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out form my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish the purpose for which I sent it.” The words of God we hold will never become empty but fulfill his purpose.

Verse 18 says, “The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.” This is the great city Babylon, the capital of Babylonian empire. So the woman could be called Babylon the religious empire.

In Chapter 17, the phrase “I saw” or “you saw” is written in seven verses (3, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, 17). John saw, the woman, the beast, the ten horns, the waters, and the beast and the ten horns. What he saw led to the complete destruction of the woman, the prostitute, Babylon religious empire.

As God’s people may we have a mind of wisdom and serve God’s purpose and will upon our lives according to his words, ultimately for his kingdom to come.