Mystery Babylon: The One-World Church of the Papacy
Revelation 17:1–6

In Revelation 17 we will study the One-World church under the papacy and the One-World religion under the False Prophet. In chapter 18 we will see the One-World government under the Antichrist. These two chapters fit nicely together as part of Mystery Babylon; chapter 17 deals with spiritual Babylon, and chapter 18 deals with economic Babylon.

The name for spiritual Babylon is found in Revelation 17:5, “MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

We learn first of all that she is a “Mystery”; one way to understand this is, false religion is more than geographical, more than human; rather, she is supernatural and demonic; she is still a mystery today in that she has not yet been revealed; however, I want to reveal what I believe makes this Harlot a Mystery; I will show from Revelation 17 that there will be a One-World Church under the papacy before there is a One-World Religion under the False Prophet; and that is the “Mystery.”

Next, she is called “Great” in that Mystery Babylon will be the final form of religion when all religions become as one under the leadership of the Antichrist and his partner the False Prophet; like the One-World Church under the papacy, it is a religion that will come out of ancient Babylon where Nimrod ordered a tower to be built to the heavens for the purpose of worshipping the heavenly bodies; God was so displeased that He confounded the languages of the people and scattered them, forming the nations of the world (Genesis 11:1–9); the final world religion will be a form of the ancient Babylonian religion where all the religions which spawned out of Babel will recollect themselves as the one final world religion known as “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots.”
She is also called the “Mother of Harlots;” this is so, in that all false religion and all idolatry is characterized in Scripture as harlotry, as prostitution, because the worshipper is intimate with other gods rather than the one true God; those who follow after false religion are committing spiritual adultery.

Finally, she is called “the Mother of the Abominations of the Earth;” that is, she is the source of all blasphemous and abominable acts against the Lord God Almighty; all this will come from ancient Babylon and it will be the religion of the whole world under the Antichrist and False Prophet in the last days.

The Description of the Harlot (17:1–6, 15)

The authority of the Harlot… “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great Harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (17:1–3); there are three things to take note of concerning this Harlot:

1. She has invaded all the nations of the world... This “great harlot sits on many waters” (17:1); in verse 15, we learn that the waters refer to peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues; the great cities of the world are built by rivers or bodies of water; Babylon of old was built by the banks of the Euphrates; Jeremiah, speaking of Babylon wrote, “O you who dwell by many waters...” (Jeremiah 51:13); when the angel tells John that “the judgment of the great Harlot sits on many waters,” it implies that the Harlot is accessible to people from all over the world and that people from every nation will come to worship at a city called Babylon (18:10); this Harlot has a special place of authority and she has invaded the nations of the world.

2. She has intoxicated the kings and inhabitants of the earth.... They “were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (17:2); it was Karl Marx who said, “Religion is the opiate of the people”; this Harlot has associated with the kings of the earth; she has won over the world’s most influential people; she has in the palm of her hand the highest levels of leadership in the world; she is successful in getting them drunk on the wine of her fornication; the word translated “fornication” (pornia) refers to spiritual adultery; these heathen rulers do not know, and have never known God;
they are not His; they never were His bride; yet the angel lets John know they are still guilty of fornicating against God; only Israel can truly commit spiritual adultery for they alone had a covenant relationship with God; yet, even these godless world leaders are being charged with committing fornication with the Harlot; that is, they become absorbed in her false religion; they are deceived by the False Prophet and his demonic powers, so they all end up in bed with the same Harlot.

3. She has *influence* because she rides on the back of a scarlet beast... “I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (17:3); John is carried away into a desert place, a place of desolation where he sees the Harlot riding on the back of the scarlet beast who is none other than the Antichrist.

Why is the Antichrist supporting the One-World religion of the Harlot? It is this false religion that pulls the world together; initially, the religious system of the Harlot is in control; religion has often been used to unite empires; Nimrod used religion to unite the world at Babel (Genesis 11); Nebuchadnezzar used religion in forcing people to bow down and worship the golden image of himself and to unite his kingdom (Daniel 3); the Caesars of Rome used Caesar worship as a means of solidifying the Roman Empire; Constantine used Roman Catholicism to unite the world under his rulership; the Antichrist is going to use the Harlot, the False Prophet, to unify his empire of a One-World government; so he puts the Harlot on his back and carries her along and for a time supports her; but as we will soon see, once he has control of the world they will no longer coexist as “The beast will hate the Harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, burn her with fire” (17:16); he will be the god of the new religion and demand that the whole world worship him; we will take up the description of the beast in our next lesson.

*The appearance of the Harlot...* “The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication” (17:4); there are three things to notice about her appearance:

1. Her clothing... She was “arrayed in purple and scarlet”; this Harlot represents wealth; she is a prosperous woman; purple dye was a sign of wealth in biblical times; remember Lydia who was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira? When she was on a business trip to Philippi, she heard
a sermon from the apostle Paul and gave her life to Christ and returned to Thyatira to help start the church in that city (Acts 16:14).

2. Her collection of jewelry... She was “adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls....” This is more emphasis on her great wealth.

3. Her cup... She had “in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication”; it is from this cup that the world gets intoxicated with the wine of her abominations and filthy fornications; this cup from which the kings and rulers and inhabitants of the world drink, not only turns the hearts of mankind away from God but also toward the Antichrist who is still carrying this Harlot on his back.

*Her association with Babylon...* “And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (17:5).

1. *The indication that the Harlot represents false religion...* Let’s see if we can unravel this mystery; this woman represents false religion, or the one-world church and later the One-World religion under the False Prophet; when you examine Scripture, religion is always feminine in gender; in Revelation the church is called “the bride” (22:17); this same imagery is implied in Ephesians 5:22–23; in terms of false religion the church of Thyatira was guilty of practicing Jezebelism (Revelation 3:18); in our text the Harlot of Babylon represents the apostate church that will pervade the world, possibly before the Tribulation, and later the One-World religion that will pervade the world during the great Tribulation.

2. *The identification of the Harlot as a Mother...* The Harlot is a mother, meaning she has a son; when you examine the religion of ancient Babylon it was Semiramis and Tammuz; however, as this religion spread throughout the Roman world, while the beliefs remained basically the same, the names of the mother and son changed: in Asia it was Cybele and Desius; in India it was Isi and Iswara; in Egypt it was Isis and Horus and Osiris; in Italy it was Venus and Cupid; in Greece it was Aphrodite and Eros; the mother-son goddesses all came out of the Roman Empire to counterfeit the virgin Mary, who bore the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22–25).
3. *The intimidation of the Harlot toward the true saints*... “I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement” (17:5); Peter de Rosa, in his book: *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* wrote: The Roman Catholic Church became, “the most persecuting faith the world has ever seen... [commanding] the throne to impose the Christian [Catholic] religion on all its subjects. Innocent III murdered far more Christians in one afternoon... than any Roman Emperor did in his entire reign.”

David Hunt in his book *A Woman Rides a Beast* wrote: The Roman Catholic Church has been “the greatest persecutor of both Jews and Christians the world has ever seen, and has martyred far more Christians than even pagan Rome or Islam. She has been exceeded only by Mao and Stalin, but they hardly claimed to be acting in Christ’s name.” (Islam has killed far more people than Catholicism—between 250 to 270 million infidels; the fact that Catholics martyred between 68 to 100 million during the Middle Ages is enough to be drunk on the blood of martyrs.)

4. *The influence of ancient Babylon on the Catholic Church*...There is coming a One-World church and ultimately a One-World religion represented by the Harlot riding on the back of a One-World government represented by the scarlet beast; how did ancient Babylon influence the Church?

In a book called *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, he states and demonstrates that all false religion came out of ancient Babylon, such as the worship of the sun, moon, and stars; from out of ancient Babylon came astrology, the signs of the zodiac, and the worship of the heavens.

From Babylon came the occult movement with its ancient wisdom, including the powers of yoga, witchcraft, voodoo, séances, and fortune telling; Epiphanius, a third-century church father, wrote: “Nimrod established the sciences of magic.”

When Nimrod’s kingdom collapsed, the religion of Babylon continued on in another Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar in 612 BC; the Chaldeans who migrated into southern Mesopotamia acquired domination in Babylon; they were known as “Neo- Babylonians”; they carried on the same worship of the heavenly bodies and even made Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz one of their gods; it was known as the Chaldean Mystery Religion.
When the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 BC under Cyrus the Great, the center of the Chaldean Mystery Religion was moved to Pergamos in Asia Minor, which came under the control of a people known as Etruscans, from western Turkey, who had conquered Rome in 600 BC; ultimately, the Chaldean Mystery Religion had great influence on Rome.

The head of the Chaldean priesthood was called Pontiff (pope), a title Julius Caesar, the first Emperor of Rome, took for himself; he was known as “The Supreme Pontiff of the Babylonian Order”; every Emperor from then on claimed that title until 376 AD when Emperor Gracian refused to do so because of his Christian convictions.

The Chaldeans of Babylon worshipped Tammuz making the sign of the “T,” later adopted by the Catholic Church as the sign of the cross; they had their priests, their monks, their nuns, their celibate priesthood, their veneration of Semiramis as “the Queen of Heaven”; they had their incense, their sacerdotal vestments, their icons, their holy days; they celebrated December 25th as the birth of Baal or Bel, the Sun-god, who in ancient Babylon was Nimrod. If all this sounds familiar, it is what Emperor Constantine referred to as “accommodation” as he and other popes adopted these practices to appeal to the pagans; it was his way of evangelizing pagans and bringing them into the Church; Catholic scholar, Cardinal John Henry Newman said that “seventy-five percent of Catholic ritual is of pagan origin.”

5. The intent of the Catholic Church to unite all “Christians” under the authority of the Church... There is coming upon the world in the end times another Babylon, called “Mystery Babylon”; could that “Mystery” have anything to do with a One-World liberal church comprised of Catholics and Protestants under the headship of a liberal Catholic pope? Or more so, could it have anything to do with a One-World religion under the False Prophet who could well be a New Age guru?

Today, the popes of the Catholic Church are accommodating liberal Protestants and pagan religions with the idea of establishing a One-World religion under the authority of the Roman Pontiff; listen to former Catholic and scholar Mike Gendron concerning the Vatican’s strategy for a One-World Church.
“It is indeed disturbing to see so many evangelicals unaware of the Vatican’s strategy for bringing the world together under the dominion of the papacy; the Vatican II Council has given permission to the Church to make a concerted effort since 1965 to bring their ‘separate brothers’ back home to the ‘holy mother church.’ In his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II said he intends ‘to promote every suitable initiative... to increase the unity of all Christians until they reach full communion’ and ‘to encourage the efforts of all who work for the cause of unity.’ The popes stated desire is ‘to gather all people and all things into Christ, so as to be for all an inseparable sacrament of unity... expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.’

“During a week of prayer for Christian unity Pope John Paul II said, ‘I gladly take this opportunity to call the attention of all believers to the ecumenical commitment that marked Vatican Council II. The Council rightly defined the division among Christians as a scandal. The Council said that the Church Fathers felt the need to beg pardon of God and of their brethren for the sins committed against unity.’ He asked Catholics to ‘cultivate an authentic spiritual ecumenism’ through the Virgin Mary, [not through the Lord Jesus Christ].

“The success of the pope’s push for unity can be seen by the announcement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He urged all Christians to recognize the Pope as ‘the supreme authority of a new global church.’ In a document called *The Gift of Authority*, the Archbishop describes the pope as ‘a gift to be received by all the churches.’”

Catholic priest Tom Forrest, who was head of Evangelism 2000 said, “Our job is to make people as richly and fully Christian as we can make them by bringing them into the Catholic Church. So evangelism is never fully successful, it is only partial until the convert is made a member of Christ’s body by being led into the Catholic Church.”

It is not enough to unite all “Christians” or what they call “separated brethren” into the Catholic Church and the authority of the pope; they want to unite all world religions under the pope’s authority, making for a One-World Religion; this will be our next lecture.
6. The indignation of traditional Catholics toward Pope Francis... If there is to be a One-World Church under the Pope, there has to be a very liberal pope in order to appeal to liberal Protestantism to join them in unity. The Guardian, October 2017, a liberal British tabloid, had these headlines: “The War Against Pope Francis.” The article reads, ”Pope Francis is one of the most hated men in the world today. Those who hate him most are not atheists, or Protestants, or Muslims, but some of his own followers. Outside the Church, he is hugely popular as a figure of almost ostentatious modesty and humility…. But within the church, Francis has provoked a furious backlash from conservatives who fear that this spirit will divide the church, and could even shatter it."

One prominent English priest said to The Guardian: ‘We can’t wait for him to die. It’s unprintable what we say in private… From his swift renunciation of the pomp of the Vatican, which served notice to the church’s 3,000 strong civil service that he meant to be its master, to the support for migrants, his attacks on global capitalism and, most of all, his moves to re-examine the church’s teaching about sex, he has scandalized reactionaries and conservatives. To judge by the voting figures at the last worldwide meeting of bishops, almost a quarter of the college of the Cardinals—the most senior clergy in the church—believe that the pope is flirting with heresy.’

“The crunch point has come in a fight over his views on divorce. Breaking with centuries, if not millennia, of Catholic theory, Pope Francis has tried to encourage Catholic priests to give communion to some divorced and remarried couples, or to families where unmarried parents are cohabitating. His enemies are trying to force him to abandon and renounce this effort.

“...Last year, one cardinal, backed by a few retired colleagues, raised the possibility of a formal declaration of heresy—a willful rejection of an established doctrine of the church, a sin punishable by excommunication. Last month, 62 disaffected Catholics, including one retired bishop and a former head of the Vatican bank, published an open letter that accused Francis of seven specific counts of heretical teaching.... Doctrine holds that the pope cannot be wrong when he speaks on the central questions of faith; so if he is wrong, he can’t be pope...”

“In 2015, American journalist Ross Douthat, a convert to Catholicism, wrote a piece in the Atlantic magazine headlined: ‘Will Pope Francis Break, Pope Francis is now at war with the Vatican. If he wins, the church could fall
apart.’ The pope’s views on divorce and homosexuality according to Archbishop from Kazakhstan had allowed ‘the smoke of Satan’ to enter the church.”

This past August 2018, Pope Francis received a scathing letter from Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano to resign over his alleged negligence in covering up sexual abuse allegations against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick who was head of the Archdiocese of Washington D.C.; one longtime Vatican watcher and scholar of the Catholic Church says the open attack on Pope Francis appears mostly about a personal animus toward the Pope because he wants to make the Church more accepting of gays.

Apart from Francis’s views that gayness is a gift from God, Pope Francis also is advocating that communion should be given to divorced people as well as those living in a fornicating relationship; Francis has stunned the Church by stating that “Atheists who do good are redeemed.” That implies one does not need Christ to be saved; he also declared that God is not powerful enough to individually create separate species; I quote Pope Francis, “When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so. He created human beings and let them develop according to the eternal laws that he gave to each one so they would reach their fulfillment.”

Did you get that line concerning creation, “we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so…” This is an absolute denial of the omnipotence of God by the pope of the Catholic Church! These statements have great appeal to liberal Protestants.

Is the Catholic Church on the verge of a split? Is liberalism taking over the Church? If so, is she becoming more appealing to liberal Protestants who have admiration for Pope Francis? That is what it will take to usher in Mystery Babylon and the One-World Church!

The Dissociation of True Christians from Catholic Theology

It is impossible for true evangelical born-again believers to conform to Catholic doctrine; yet, Word of Faith teachers like Kenneth Copeland are leading the way to unite Protestants and Catholics; when Paul Crouch was
hosting Trinity Broadcasting he said, “I am eradicating the word protestant even out of my vocabulary... I’m not protesting anything... It’s time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together, as one in spirit and one in the Lord”; liberal Protestants from most all denominations have been present to pay tribute to Pope Francis at his Ecumenical Councils for Christian unity.

There is no way that those who remain true to the faith can join in union with Roman Catholics; I am not going to condemn individual Catholics who believe that Jesus was virgin born, God in the flesh, who died for our sins on a cross and rose triumphantly from the grave to be their Lord and Savior; they may well be saved and children of God; however, there are doctrines and practices within Roman Catholicism that were never part of biblical Christianity.

While Catholics deny they worship Mary, yet on February 15, 1926, Catholic dogma tells us that the child Jesus came and urged Catholics, quote: "To spend this devotion of and reparation to the Immaculate Heart of the Holy Mother Mary... Reparation must be made to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in order for mankind to be saved."

In other words, Jesus is to bring the world to Mary who has been given her place in the salvation of mankind, while Jesus is depicted as a helpless babe dependent on His mother who is called “the Queen of Heaven.”

Not only is the veneration of Mary a form of idolatry, but there are many teachings of Catholicism that would prevent any Bible-believing Christian from seeking unity with the Roman Catholic Church.

For example, Catholics deny that the death of Christ was totally sufficient to pay for our sins; they teach there is both an eternal and a temporal consequences for sin; belief in Christ’s death pays for the eternal consequence, while one’s good deeds such as participation in the sacraments must be added to what Christ has done; praying the rosary, confession to a priest, baptism in the church and indulgences earned are necessary, as one will have to suffer in purgatory where the soul, already cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, must be more thoroughly purged.

The Council of Trent from 1545 to 1563 and affirmed in Vatican II in 1969 stated: “If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification
the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged by the person’s own suffering, either in this world or in purgatory, before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.”

That is, if you believe that Jesus paid for all your sins and you don’t need to pay for your own sins by suffering in purgatory, you are to be damned.

Furthermore, Vatican II said: “We affirm that there is a purgatory and that the souls there detained are aided by the suffrage of the faithful and that the Bishops shall see to it that the suffrages of the living, that is the sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety which they have been accustomed to perform to the faithful departed be piously and devoutly discharged in accordance with the laws of the church.”

In other words, these people in purgatory depend on the faithful on earth to shorten their time in purgatory by doing good works on their behalf.

Then there is the doctrine of transubstantiation, which is the belief that the priest literally turns the cup and bread of communion into the literal body and blood of Jesus, so that in a mystical way Catholic worshippers are eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood; my response is this, when Jesus first instituted the Lord’s Supper, he said, “Take, eat, this is My body.” Then He took the cup and said, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27–28); if the disciples were eating His body and drinking His blood, why is His physical body still present with them while they are consuming it?

These and many other teachings of the Catholic Church should make it impossible for Bible-believing Christians to join in union with Catholics under the headship of the pope.

Roman Catholicism wears the old paganism of Rome surviving under the thin veneer of Christian terminology which can be traced back to ancient Babylon; no less than the great historian Will Durant wrote: “When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and vestments of the Pontifex Maximus, the worship of the Great Mother, and the multitude of comforting divinities, the sense of supersensitive presence everywhere, the joy of solemnity of old festivals and the
pageantry of immemorial ceremony passed like material blood into the new religion and captive Rome captured her conqueror. While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity.”

There is coming a One-World Church under the papacy of Rome; the unity of believers is a theme of recent popes including Pope Francis; liberal Protestants are eagerly listening and desiring this unity under a liberal Catholic pope; this is my understanding of Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots; but there is more to come; for this One-World Church will collapse under the False Prophet, who will bring about a One-World Religion riding on the back of the beast called the Antichrist. This is the second part of the Mystery.