Mystery Babylon: The One-World Religion of the False Prophet
Revelation 17:7–18

John has referred to end-time religion as “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth” (17:5); this Mystery comes in two parts and that may well be the mystery.

First, there is the One-World Church under a liberal pope that unites apostate Catholics and Protestants together; the headquarters for this One-World Church will be in the Vatican as part of Rome, which in the days of the first-century Church was given the code name Babylon (2 Peter 5:13); to the early Christians, Babylon was a symbol of bondage, humiliation, and false religion; under the Roman Empire, the early Christians were subjected to false religions such as Caesar worship; they were persecuted and many were martyred for their faith; this caused many church fathers to believe they were living in the time of the Great Tribulation; so Babylon became a code name for the city of Rome and her empire.

Second, the One-World Church will be overrun by the One-World Religion of the False Prophet whom we will seek to identify.

In our lecture last week we talked about the One-World Church under a liberal pope; it will be the death of Protestantism as apostate Protestants and apostate Catholics unite under an apostate pope; in this lecture, we expand a bit on that and then talk about the forming of a One-World Religion under a different False Prophet.

First, we will break down the text and then elaborate on our conclusions.
The Deception of the Beast (17:7–14)

The confusion of John... “But the angel said to me, ‘Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns’” (17:7); the angel has been explaining to John about a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names and blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns, and on the forehead of the woman a name was written, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”; and the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints; John was marveling at what he had heard and was confused; the angel assures John that he did not need to wonder any longer for he will explain it; the question in John’s mind is, “How does the harlot religious system work together with the beast that the whole world is worshipping?” To put it another way, if the world is worshipping the beast who is the Antichrist, how can it be worshipping the Harlot at the same time?

The angel begins by giving a lengthy explanation of the beast that runs from verse 8 to verse 14; in order to understand the Harlot, she is to bring the beast to worldwide recognition and to give him authority over the earth; this she does by faking the death, burial, and resurrection of the beast, who is the Antichrist.

The counterfeiting of the resurrection... “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” (17:8); the Antichrist is a beast that was, and is not, and yet is; going back to Revelation 13:12–15, we read where the False Prophet exercises all the authority of the Antichrist in his presence and causes all that are on the earth to worship the Antichrist, whose deadly wound was healed; he deceives the whole earth by performing signs and wonders in the sight of men, even convincing them that the Antichrist was fatally wounded, but came back to life again; it is the False Prophet who makes an image of the beast and those who do not worship the image are killed; this image could be in the Tribulation temple, but seen on screens worldwide.

When the Antichrist is supposedly resurrected, he comes out of the abyss which is the abode of demons; what seems to be happening in this fake resurrection is, the Antichrist is no longer purely human but he has become possessed with great demons, perhaps even Satan incarnate; he is catapulted to another level of operation, and the False Prophet comes alongside him performing signs and
wonders to assist his promotion in the world; this fake resurrection amazes the 
whole world and his demonic power draws the world to the Antichrist, all with the 
assistance of the Harlot as the two become a team: the Antichrist is now 
recognized as the world economic leader and the Harlot as the world religious 
leader; they coexist as leaders of the One-World government and the One-World 
religion.

Why the partnership? World rulers have often used religion to unify their kingdom 
and solidify their position as king or emperor; Nimrod used sun worship and 
astrology to solidify his hold on ancient Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar used the 
worship of the golden image, a 90 foot statue of himself, to solidify his reign over a 
new Babylon; the Caesars of Rome used Caesar worship to solidify their rulership 
over the Roman Empire; in the day of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will use 
the Harlot to unite and solidify his leadership of the One-World government.

*The characteristics of the scarlet beast...*

1. The *descriptions* of the seven heads... “Here is the mind which has wisdom: 
the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. These also 
are seven kings...” (17:9–10a); The seven heads on the beast refer to two 
things:

First, it represents seven mountains on which the woman sits; many see this 
as a reference to Rome; in the days of the apostles, Rome was known as the 
city of seven hills; it was Ovid, an ancient Roman poet (43 BC–17 AD) who 
said, “But Rome looks around on the whole globe from her seven 
mountains, the seat of the empire and the abode of the gods.” Augustine 
wrote, “Babylon is the former Rome, and Rome is a later Babylon”; the 
Harlot comes out of Rome; could that be a reference to a liberal apostate 
papacy?

Second, it represents seven kings or kingdoms. “Five have fallen, one is, 
and the other has yet to come...” (17:10b); there have been many kingdoms 
to rule over the earth but the seven kingdoms referred to are those which 
have held the Jewish people in captivity; the five that have fallen are: Egypt, 
Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece; the one that is and existed in the days of 
John is Rome; the one yet to come is the Revived Roman Empire under the 
control of the Antichrist.
2. The *duration* of the reign of the seventh king... “And when he comes he must continue a short time” (17:10c); the rule of the Antichrist is but 3½ years; or he will be “given authority for forty-two months” (13:5); he gains his authority to rule in the middle of the Tribulation and his rulership will end when Christ returns to earth with the saints to set up His earthly kingdom.

3. The *duplicity* of the seventh kingdom... “The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition” (17:11); this may be a bit confusing, but let’s see if we can understand it. The Antichrist has such authority that he is like a kingdom unto himself, hence he is the eighth kingdom while part of the seventh kingdom; in other words, it is like saying, he is as big as the kingdom itself; you cannot separate the Antichrist from his kingdom; the beast of Revelation is both the Antichrist and the kingdom over which he rules; however, when his kingdom ends he is “going to perdition,” that is, he will be cast into hell (19:19–20).

4. The *designation* of the ten horns... “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” (17:12); there are different ideas about the ten horns which are ten kings; some see these ten kings as ten world powers that will ultimately rise up in cooperation with the Antichrist and ultimately destroy the Harlot (17:16); some see the world divided into ten regions with a vassal king ruling each division under the authority of the Antichrist; since his kingdom has not yet formed, these kings have no kingdom as yet.

I have a different idea based on Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; remember, he dreamed of a giant image that represented the great empires that were to come with the head being his own kingdom of Babylon, the arms and chest of the image being the Medes and Persians, the belly and thighs being the Greeks, the two legs of iron representing the eastern and western divisions of the Roman Empire with the feet and toes partly of clay and partly of iron; this suggests a final kingdom, a Revived Roman Empire that is partly fragile and partly strong; it ultimately will not adhere; this final kingdom is to exist when Christ returns; once the fragile feet and toes are exposed, Daniel sees a stone that will be carved out of the side of a mountain without hands filling the whole earth; that is the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Daniel 2:31–45).
When Rome fell in 476 AD, ten nations came from that empire that formed Europe; today you have a very fragile European Union of 28 nations, some made of clay, others of iron; could the 10 kings represent the European Union that will throw its support behind the Antichrist? These kings are contemporaries of the Antichrist and will assist his agenda; to clarify, I see the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s images, partly of clay and partly of iron being symbolic of the 10 nations that started in Europe and today represent a weakened and divided European Union; the number 10 has nothing to do with the number of nations in the EU at the time of the Antichrist—there may be 10 nations or there may be 50 at the that time; I firmly believe the Antichrist will come out of Europe, though I have no idea who he will be; he will get the full support of the fragile European Union which will be in a state of near collapse.

5. The dedication of the ten kings… “These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (17:13); we learned from verse 12 that these kings receive authority for one hour, referring to a short period of time; this one hour might refer to three of the kings, who for some unknown reason rebel against the leadership of the Antichrist; we see this possibility in a vision the Lord gave to Daniel; he speaks of the ten horns on the beast of Rome, once again representing the 10 nations that come out of the Roman Empire forming Europe; Daniel then sees a little horn coming up from among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots; that little horn grew up to become the Antichrist speaking pompous words and making war against the saints and prevailing over them (Daniel 7:7–8, 20–21); once the Antichrist comes to power, having full support of the 10 kings, something happens that causes three of the kings to rebel and be uprooted because of some civil conflict within the empire of the Antichrist.

The conflict of the kings with the Lamb… “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” (17:14); when Christ returns in His second coming, the Antichrist and the kings who support him will make war against Christ and He will overcome them; in Revelation 19:19–20 we read, “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who
worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” In the end, we win! Amen!

The Destruction of the Harlot (17:15–18)

_The significance of the waters and the city where the harlot sits…_ “Then he said to me, ‘The waters which you saw, where the Harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues… And the woman who you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (17:15, 18). The harlot lives in a city called Babylon; it is my belief that Babylon is Rome by the Tiber River; the waters represent more than a river; it represents peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues; this Harlot has worldwide influence; the center of the One-World Church is Rome, the city of seven hills on which the Harlot also sits (17:9).

_The slaughter of the Harlot out of hatred from the ten kings…_ “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” (17:16).

There comes a time when the Antichrist has gained control of the world, and he wants the world to worship him; he wants to be god; he proclaimed himself to be god when he took control of the Tribulation temple (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and now that the Harlot has successfully unified the world through religion, the Antichrist instructs the ten kings to destroy the Harlot; the text says, they “eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”

The Antichrist does not want any other religion than the worship of himself, so he hates the Harlot and makes her desolate; he cannot stand the competition because the religion of the Harlot has great power as she has seductive control over the people of the world; if you don’t think religion has greater power than politics, then ask yourself why all the politicians on earth cannot stop people from fighting each other over religion? Religion kills people; religious wars have been throughout history; today, Islam is a worldwide threat and politician can’t agree on how to stop it; some want open borders, some want to close the borders; some allow Sharia law within their countries and others have outlawed it; some go to war to stop its advance; some believe that Islam will play a major role in end-time prophecy; it will take over the One-World Church of the Pope and become a dominating force in the world like has never been seen before; some see Islam as the real Harlot of Babylon; however, whoever the False Prophet is, the Antichrist with all his demonic power will have her destroyed; the Antichrist alone will be god!
The sovereignty of God behind her death... “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” (17:17); all this is the will of God; He is the One who puts in the hearts of the ten kings to hate the Harlot and to burn her to death; there is nothing that Satan, the Antichrist, and the Harlot can do without God directing their mission; He knows their hearts and He ultimately allows them to destroy themselves, first the Harlot and then the Antichrist and finally Satan himself.

The Discovery of the Harlot who Rides the Beast

The Harlot of Revelation is both a person and a false religion; they cannot be separated. I see the Harlot as both a One-World Church under a liberal and apostate Pope which will be overcome by a One-World Religion under another False Prophet—perhaps some New Age guru; the term harlot refers to spiritual adultery or false religion; one harlot goes and another takes her place; one harlot is a liberal pope to be overpowered by a possible Harlot New Age guru.

In our last lesson, we spoke of efforts by Pope John Paul II and the current Pope Francis to unite all protestants under the Catholic Church; leading protestant evangelist Kenneth Copeland and many in the Word of Faith Movement are among those assisting Pope Francis in this endeavor; he also has the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury who has recognized 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.”

For years the World Council of Churches, representing 500 million Christians in 110 countries, has sought to unite Protestants and Catholics under the authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church; in June 2015, Pope Francis celebrated the 50th anniversary of the WCC with a letter of support for Christian unity with the liberal wing of Protestantism.

However, the Catholic Church is not just interested in uniting all Christians under the papacy, but all world religions as well; one of the most alarming things Pope John Paul II did during his papacy was to reach out to all religions of the world in an attempt to bring them under the influence of the Catholic Church; in October of 1986, he invited leaders from all world religions to come to Assisi, Italy to join him in praying to the various gods for world peace; one of those who came was the Dalai Lama, who is considered by his followers to be a god; did he pray to himself? This bizarre gathering of spiritual leaders was attended by Confucians, Shintoists,
Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Wiccans, African witch doctors, and American Indian chiefs, to name a few; Pope John Paul II was the first pope to ever visit a Muslim mosque and to kiss the Quran.

This pope is not alone; the current Pope Francis not only prayed with Muslims when he visited the Blue Mosque in Istanbul in 2012, but he too kissed the Quran; an article published by Liberty University about Pope Francis was titled: “Pope Francis is Striving to Combine All Religions into One.”

After Pope Francis was elected, the cover of Time Magazine had his picture with the words, “New World Pope”; the article said his top priority is an ecumenical outreach to bring all religions together; furthermore, he has made it abundantly clear that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

The Harlot Church of Revelation 17 will be one where she is a “great city” as well as “seven mountains on which the woman sits” (17:18, 9); currently, only one system, one place, one church fits this description: the Roman Catholic church whose Vatican headquarters sits on the famed Seven Hills in Rome.

While I believe the day will come when the Catholic Church will be successful in uniting apostate Protestants and apostate Catholics under the authority of an apostate pope thus forming a One-World Church, I have difficulty believing that all world religions will be part of that Church; I cannot believe that the priests of Buddhism and Hinduism will give up their gods to join the apostate Church; I have a hard time believing the Mullah’s of Islam will stop worshipping Allah; in fact, Islam is growing so rapidly around the world that it is projected to surpass Christianity as the world’s largest religion by 2050; rather, what I see is, first a One-World apostate Church under the control of the papacy; it will be overthrown by a militant One-World Religion of the False Prophet.

Who is the False Prophet? Various suggestions have been given.

The Pope of the Roman Catholic Church?

Some believe the Pope of the Catholic will be the Antichrist as did Martin Luther and many of the reformers; I do not believe that, because the Antichrist is an atheist—not believing in a personal God (Daniel 7:25); others believe he will become the False Prophet; some even see him as the current Pope Francis; this is based on a prophecy by a Catholic seer known as St. Malachy (1094-1148) who
stated the 112th pope would be the Church’s last pope; if so, that would be Francis; however, we do not accept St. Malachy as an inspired prophet from God.

The Coming Mahdi of Islam?

Others see the False Prophet as the coming Mahdi of Islam, a messianic figure who was born in Samarra, Iraq in the year 868 AD; sometime between the ages of 4 and 6 he vanished and has become supernaturally invisible, hence is called the “Hidden Imam”; he is presently in a state of occultation, surviving to this day, though mysteriously hidden and it is believed he will appear once Iran destroys Israel; the Mahdi is said to be sinless and infallible and when he comes he will avenge the blood of all those who persecuted the Shiites; once the Mahdi reveals himself, the Muslim Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with 70,000 angels and he will assist the Mahdi in forcing all non-Muslims to follow the Mahdi and to worship Allah alone or die.

Some even see another war between apostate Christians and Islam as to who will lead this One-World Religion; just this past June, there was a hint of this when the Austrian government shut down seven mosques and expelled 60 imams because they were being funded illegally by the Turkish government; photos from inside the mosques showed Turkish children being trained to be martyrs; Austria’s move against the mosques infuriated Turkey’s government, and President Erdogan warned of a “coming war between the cross and the crescent.” This may be just the beginning—threats now and war later.

There are problems with the religion of Islam and their coming Mahdi as being the coming False Prophet; the Antichrist is an atheist (Daniel 7:25); there is no way that Islam or their supposedly coming Mahdi would ever give support to an atheist Antichrist; he would clearly be regarded as an infidel whom Islam will totally reject; there is reason to believe that Islam as a religion will be totally wiped out during the Tribulation because of her opposition to the Antichrist as he will be responsible for the destruction of a fourth of the earth’s population (Revelation 6:7–8).

A Coming Atheistic New Age Guru?

Most likely the False Prophet is also an atheist, that is, one who does not believe in a personal God—who is some New Age guru with Satanic occult practices and beliefs that can be traced back to ancient Babylon; concerning the fall of end-time
Babylon, Revelation says she will be destroyed because "by your sorcery all the nations were deceived" (Revelation 18:23).

Sorcery is witchcraft and is associated with the occult; it is very much a part of Satan’s arsenal; it also has ties with the New Age Movement with its roots in witchcraft, astrology, and Hinduism; it does not teach a personal God, just a cosmic force, a fragment of which is in us; therefore we are gods; Jesus was simply a man who evolved into an Ascended Master, that is, a god-like being through occult and metaphysical disciplines; Christ is simply an impersonal “force” that rested on the man Jesus and made him special, and can even rest on us; the Bible is simply outdated Jewish legends; its teachings are pantheistic, with a belief in reincarnation and communication with the dead; in the 1980s this Movement became enmeshed in every area of society, including public education; corporations use its techniques for executive training seminars. Have you ever heard of the Positive Mental Attitude Movement of Napoleon Hill (PMA), the Forum of Werner Erhard, L. Ron Hubbard’s Scientology, or the Silva Mind Control of Jose Silva? They are used by corporations to help their employees become more successful in their companies; political and military leaders push it, and the United Nations has become a major center for promoting it; it is the religion of those who worship Gaia, or Mother Earth as well as radical environmentalists; even some churches teach New Age concepts; it seems to me, this godless religion could well be the teaching of the False Prophet under the Antichrist.

Whoever the False Prophet might be, he will be used by the Antichrist only to solidify his position as the One-World dictator over a One-World government; once his position is secured he “will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (17:16); this is how the Harlot will come to her demise!

We have concluded there are three harlots that make up the False Prophet and her “abominations of the earth” (17:5b)—first, the liberal, apostate pope of the Roman Catholic Church; second, a yet, unidentified figure who will most likely be an atheist, New Age guru of the One-World Religion; ultimately, the Antichrist himself becomes the Harlot once he disposes the False Prophet and takes total control of both the One-World Government and the One-World Religion.

Is there any place in Scripture that suggests the Harlot is both a One-World church and then a One-World religion that will lead the world into religious apostasy? There are two possible examples in Scripture.
When the False Prophet was first introduced in Revelation 13 he is a two-horned beast from out of the earth; he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon (13:11); could one horn refer to the One-World church under a liberal pope and the other horn refer to the One-World religion headed up by an atheistic New Age guru? That is certainly a possibility.

There is an interesting vision in Zechariah 5:5–11; an angel talks to Zechariah saying, “Lift up your eyes and see what goes forth?” And Zechariah saw a flying basket traveling throughout the earth; there was a lead disc lifted up with a woman sitting inside the basket; the angel tells Zechariah, “This is Wickedness!” The woman was thrust down in the basket and the lid was lowered to close on the woman and all the wickedness that was inside the basket; then two women come with the wind in their wings, and like that of a stork, they lift up the basket and carry it off to the land of Shinar which is ancient Babylon to build a house; when the house is built, the basket will set there on its base.

This prophecy has both a current meaning for its day, as well as a prophetic end times message; in Zechariah’s day the basket was filled with the iniquity of Israel in her corrupt business and government transactions; the woman inside the basket was another kind of wickedness, an idolatrous religion that Israel was guilty of worshipping; God closes the lid on both the women and the wickedness; God will not allow this woman and this wickedness to stand forever; they will one day be suffocated out of existence as the basket is carried back to ancient Babylon where Nimrod made the first attempt at a One-World government and a One-World religion (Genesis 10:8–10; 11:1–9); they are both buried there.

How might we interpret the prophetic message of Zechariah’s vision of the flying basket? The basket with all its wickedness represents the Antichrist and his One-World government with all its corruption and evil; the woman in the basket is the Harlot of the One-World religion riding on the back of the Antichrist; they circle the earth until two women come with the wind in their wings and carry the basket back to Shinar or Babylon where the One-World government and the One-World religion began under Nimrod; who are the two women? Could one be the apostate one-world church under an apostate pope and the other be the apostate One-World religion under a yet unidentified atheistic leader of a New Age guru of occultism that comes out of ancient Babylon? The lid comes down on the Harlot and the wickedness of the Antichrist and they are no more, both buried in the land of Shinar where they began. How ironic, or better yet, how like God, to bring to an end the evil work of the Devil right where it all began.