

The End of Christ-less Religion!

A thirty year span of time in England in the 1500's shows the awful things that can happen when church and state become one.

You may remember that 1517 was the year that Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg. In it he gave 95 largely scriptural concerns, things the Roman Catholic Church was doing that were contradicted by the Bible. It was still a time when the average person living in Europe was either discouraged or forbidden to read the Bible.

Copies of Luther's 95 Theses were distributed throughout Europe, and Protestant views began to be held everywhere, including England. King Henry the VIII was no convinced Protestant, to be sure. He believed in transubstantiation, priestly celibacy, and other Catholic doctrines. But he had a problem. His first wife, Catherine of Aragon, despite eight times trying, had not born him a male heir that lived. Only one daughter by her, Mary, survived into adulthood. So in 1517 Henry desired to annul the marriage and start over with someone more likely to bear a male heir, but the Pope said those were not sufficient grounds. If Henry left his wife the Pope would excommunicate him from the church.

For some reason about that time Henry became very interested in Protestant ideas! An up and coming scholar named Thomas Cranmer told Henry he believed that Henry's marriage was not valid and should be annulled. Henry responded by promoting the young scholar to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. One of his first acts as Archbishop was to declare Henry's first marriage invalid. Henry quickly married Anne Boleyn, who was already pregnant with his child.

The year after that in 1534 Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy recognizing the King, not the Pope, as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, or Anglican Church. Later that year The Act Respecting the Oath to the Succession was passed. It declared that when Henry died Anne's children, not Mary from Catherine, would reign. Everyone in England was required to sign an oath pledging their agreement. When Thomas More and John Fisher refused, they were beheaded in 1535.

Over the next five years Cranmer worked with Thomas Cromwell to close Catholic monasteries and confiscate the properties and valuables of Roman Catholic churches throughout England and bring them to Henry's treasuries. Henry himself proved hard to please for these Protestant reformers. On the one hand, in 1538 he ordered an English Bible to be put in every parish church. But in 1543 he prohibited the reading of it. In 1539 Henry decided he thought priests should be celibate like the Roman Catholics. Cranmer sent his own wife to Germany during that time.

Henry's love life proved very hard to justify. Tired of Anne Boleyn, he had her executed in 1536. Might as well use that absolute power thing, huh? He re-married Jane Seymour, who then died giving birth to Edward. Then he married Anne of Cleves in January 1540 but called on his old friend Cranmer to annul that one in July. That annulment didn't sit to well with Cromwell. When he refused to support the divorce proceedings, Henry had him executed at Tower Hill on July 28, 1540. A few months later Henry married Catherine Howard but two years later accused her of adultery and had her executed, marrying yet another Catherine three years later.

Through it all Cranmer used the political connection to strengthen the Protestant Church of England. He wrote the Book of Common Prayer during these years. It became the required form to follow for churches in England. It actually had some very good stuff in it. Henry died in 1547 holding Cranmer's hand. Edward became king at nine years old but died only six years later.

At that time, in 1553, Mary became queen. Yep, that Mary, who historians call "bloody Mary." Like her mother, Henry's first wife who had been exiled, she remained staunchly Catholic. And she decided that just as force had been used to suppress Catholicism under her dad, she would use it to bring Catholicism back. During her reign 290 Protestants were executed. To be fair to her, it is said her dad had more than 70,000 people executed during his reign for lots of reasons. One of her 290 killed was Thomas Cranmer, burned at the stake on March 21, 1556.

The entire thirty years shows how awful it can be when the church and the state become one. Later Catholics and Protestants did come to agree on one thing: Anabaptists and Baptists and others that thought the church and state should be separate were the real danger to both the church and the state!

Looking back now we can laugh, but only because now...

Everyone in the West agrees that church and state should be separate. We've seen how awful it can be when church and state are one. But our passage for today shows us that during the tribulation, church and state will again unite.

Read Revelation 17 PRAY!

In chapter 16 we were told under the judgment of the seventh bowl that Babylon and all she represents is going down.

As Revelation has done several times, more detail follows about this fall of Babylon in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

As we will see, chapter seventeen is about the fall of religious Babylon, and chapter eighteen is about the fall of political and commercial Babylon.

As we look at chapter seventeen this week, we will talk about the rise of the false religion and its false prophet, the ride of the False Religion and its False Prophet, and the Ruin of the False Religion.

The Rise of the False Religion and its False Prophet

Verse one tells us the purpose of this chapter.

John is told, "Come, and I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute who sits on many waters."

Look at verse 15. It tells us that the waters are essentially the nations of the earth!

During the tribulation this false religion will have influence and notoriety throughout the earth.

Now you say, "Danny, I'm confused! You keep talking about false religion here, but it is talking about a prostitute!"

Well, here's where it helps if you have read the whole Bible a time or two!

“Women in Bible prophecy are always considered a symbol of religion, whether good or bad.” -Adrian Rogers, 192

The church of the Lord Jesus is called “the bride of Christ.”

In chapter twelve Israel was described as “a woman clothed with the sun...and a crown of 12 stars on her head.”

When Jesus comes back we will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb!

For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, because I have promised you in marriage to one husband- to present a pure virgin to Christ. -2 Cor. 11:2

And so in the Bible God's people are given their goal: to be faithful and pure in God's eyes when He returns for what is referred to as a joyous wedding!

You know, I did a wedding Friday night, and the Bride and Groom's smiles lit up this building!

But in this chapter we see another symbol of religion, but this one is not pure. This one is a prostitute. Maybe your version says a harlot. The Greek word is *pornes*, from which we derive the word pornography.

If the people of God purify the planet as salt and light, the religion of Babylon pollutes the planet with its sewage.

Verse two tells us that the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her.

Whenever that phrase is used like that it is speaking of idolatry, taking things that aren't God and worshipping them as if they were God. Idolatry also happens when we take things that God will bless if we do them the way He instructs us to, and use them in ways God can not bless but must judge.

The sad tale of England in the 1500's show how easily it can happen when state and church both want to please each other.

Now back in chapter thirteen we read of two beasts that get their power from Satan. One was clearly the Antichrist, and the other was clearly the one

chapter sixteen calls the False Prophet. Chapter thirteen made clear the False Prophet will help the Antichrist achieve worldwide acceptance.

Since the scarlet beast we will talk about in a moment is clearly the Antichrist, this notorious prostitute can only be the False Religion led by the False Prophet.

But let's talk about her a little more! Look at verses four and five.

Verse four lets us know this false religion is characterized by beauty and riches. Verse five lets us in on a mystery: this false religion has its roots in "Babylon the Great."

The Bible really is a tale of two cities. Jerusalem is the city of God; Babylon is the city of fallen man. And that is true going all the way back to the tower of Babel, which became Babylon. Jerusalem says, "The Lord is God!" Babylon says, "we will be gods."

Gen. 10 & 11 tell us that Nimrod was the founder of Babel.

In Gen. 11 it's recorded that men rebelled against God & attempted to build a tower that would reach the sky. It was a monument to human pride & an act of rebellion against God.

In judging this act God confounded the language of the people and gave the city the name Babel, which means confusion.

Nimrod's wife was named Semiramis, and she became the high priestess of the so called Babylon mysteries which had secret rites which were part of the worship of idols in Babylon.

The claim was that she gave birth to a son that was conceived miraculously. His name was Tammuz, and he was considered a savior of his people and was, in effect, a false messiah, purported to be the fulfillment of the promise given to Eve.

Folks, that's what Satan does, he counterfeits the truth, and then adds in elements of so called worship that appeal to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

The legend of the mother and child was incorporated into the religious rites and is repeated in various pagan religions. Idols picturing the mother as the Queen of Heaven with the babe in her arms are found throughout the ancient world.

The acts of worship featured a priestly order that practiced the sprinkling of holy water and there was an order of people set aside for sex acts as worship. Tammuz was said to have been killed by a wild beast and afterwards brought back to life, another Satanic counterfeit of the real deal.

Israel got caught up in these pagan acts. Jeremiah mentions the heathen practices of making cakes and burning incense for the Queen of Heaven. The worship of Baal was another form of this same thing. Walvoord, 247

After Jesus came and died for sins and rose again, the early church marvelously spread the gospel for the next 300 years. But then Constantine was converted, and the church and state entered an unholy union. One by one the Roman Catholic Church allowed Babylonian practices to mix with what the Bible calls for.

Mary increasingly was lifted up as the queen of Heaven. Several official Mary doctrines are still very troubling. The Immaculate Conception teaches she was born without sin. The Assumption of Mary, codified in just 1950, says she was specially brought to Heaven body and soul at the end of her life.

Millions of Catholics have actually signed a petition to make official doctrine what they believe, that Mary is a Coredemptrix, or Co-Redeemer with Christ! That's blasphemy! To their credit, Roman Catholic leaders have not let that happen. But the last Pope wore a sash that said, "Totally devoted to you, *Mary!*"

Even more troubling is the sacramental system, which keeps a person's eyes on fulfilling the sacrament rather than on the news of grace in the biblical gospel. Roman Catholic doctrine is that once an infant is sprinkle baptized they are guaranteed they will not go to Hell. If they are a good Catholic and follow the rest of the sacraments, they will either go to Heaven when they die or Purgatory where they can work their way into Heaven.

Works-works-works! It's all works, obscuring the good news of a Savior who has done for people what they could not do for themselves! Thank God for the Reformation! Thank God for the Bible.

Look at verse nine. Here it tells us the prostitute is seated on seven mountains. There really is no doubt that is Rome, called the city of seven hills, the center of the world in John's day, which of course is also home of the Vatican, the home of the Roman Catholic Church. Verse six says John was astounded when he saw this woman who was drunk with all the saints she had killed.

Why was he astounded? Because she looked religious on the outside, but was responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

"Danny, are you saying this prostitute of the tribulation is the Roman Catholic Church?" No, I'm not. I am saying that the Roman Catholic Church of the time of the Middle Ages gave us a picture of what this could look like. There has been a back to the Bible within Catholicism that is impressive. Still, many of the official

doctrines are still very troubling and should be changed if the Vatican is serious about reform.

I believe that after the rapture of born again Christians, those left who really aren't born again and don't obey the Bible will do anything it takes to have unity with other religions, even if that means calling God 'Allah.' The movement is already underway in our own day.

Listen to this proposed charter for an organization within the United Nations for united religions:

"We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional, norm for all areas of life: for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behavior which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order." -Adrian Rogers, 193.



False Religion has at least three characteristics:

- 1. False religion sets aside the infallible Word of God for the pronouncements of fallible men.**
- 2. False religion replaces the good news of a Savior who has done for us what we can't do for ourselves with sets of rules that enslave**
- 3. False religion loves to coerce with the help of the state when it can't convince with words alone**

All three characteristics will all be present during the time of the tribulation.

We've seen the rise of the False Religion, now let's see...

The Ride of the False Religion and its False Prophet

Verse three tells us the prostitute will be riding the scarlet beast, the one with seven heads and ten horns.

In the message I did on chapter thirteen we learned about this.

This is referring to both the Antichrist and the nations he will arise from.

The Bible tells us in places like Daniel 7 that there will be a ten kingdom version of the Roman Empire at the end of days.

After my message from chapter thirteen I looked a little closer at this. The nations of Europe fall within the Old Roman Empire. I went through Operation World and tried to see how many of those European nations had been colonizers of America, Africa, and Asia.

Do you know what I found? I found 10 major ones and two smaller ones. For instance, Great Britain has over 70 nations that have ties to it through the old British Empire. Spain had over 25 colonies that are now nations. France had over 40! When you combine all of them together, you have most of the United Nations represented. The Antichrist will arise from one of those ten horns.

Now verses 10-11 tell us the seven heads are seven kings, five have fallen, one, is, the other has not come, but is from the seven and is himself the eighth. When John was writing the one who is was probably a reference to the current ruler of the Roman Empire, with the Antichrist coming from his type and being the eighth!

There will be a united world under the Antichrist, and false religion will help make it happen.

Do you think I am overreaching in putting these things together?

LOOK AT TWO TOWER OF BABEL IMAGES.

First, Painting by Pieter Bruegel/1563

Second, European Union Parliament, Strasbourg, France/2009

Third, the poster from the 1990's-

Do you see? Our EU building will be designed like the painting of the Tower of Babel. There are 10 Little Stars, One Big One. The Slogan: Europe-Many tongues, one voice.

That poster was only removed after Christians protested. But one day the church will be raptured, and mankind will be on to the tower of Babel. And false religion will help make it happen.

We've seen the rise, and the ride of false religion, now let's see...

The Ruin of the False Religion

Verse 16 tells what is really a sad story. Let's read it.

Having used false religion to gain power, the Antichrist and the ten horns he leads will first hate false religion, and then devour it. This usually is what happens when the church tries to partner with politicians. Eventually politicians that have used the church to get to power turn away from the church after they have.

Putting together the Bible's data I believe false religion will help the Antichrist gain worldwide power, perhaps even rebuilding Israel's temple in a show of tolerance, but at the mid-point of the tribulation the Antichrist will turn on all religion and insist on being worshipped.

Interestingly, the False Prophet appears to make it to the end of the tribulation. We see his demise later. It appears he himself will lead the world's false religions as a double agent for the antichrist.

Unfortunately, many good people are in liberal churches today that are led by people that don't really believe the Bible and are really wolves in clerical clothing.



Well what can we do?

Three Responses we should have because of false religion:

First, Treasure Christ! Abide in Him!

Is your faith really about your personal relationship with the living God?
If not, repent!

Second, do what it says in the Bible!

Jesus said "if you love me, you'll obey my commands!"

Third, never bully people, but rely on the power of the Holy Spirit!

We don't need the state to accomplish what Jesus has called us to!
Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord!

Let's Pray!