## THROUGH THE BIBLE REVELATION 17-18

Mae West was one of the bad girls of Hollywood. She played risqué roles, and wrote saucy scripts.

One of her broadway plays was raided by the police. They arrested the actress for "corrupting the morals of youth." She was sentenced to ten days in a NY jail.

It was said of Mae West, "She is the kind of girl who climbed the ladder of success, wrong by wrong."

Here're a few of the actress' quotes: "I use to be Snow White, but I drifted..." "Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution yet..." "I only like two kinds of men: domestic and foreign..." And finally, "I've been in more laps than a napkin..." Mae West was a woman who became a star by being a slut.

And in tonight's chapters we find *"the Mae West of the Bible" - a biblical bad girl - a spiritual prostitute.* 

In verse 5 she's given an unflattering, and disturbing name, *"Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the Earth."* 

"The whore of Babylon" is a false religious system that rises to prominence on the back of the Antichrist.

Understand, Satan has never, ever had an original idea. His desire is to steal worship from God, but he does so by mimicking God and His cast of characters. God has a Savior, *Jesus Christ* - but so does Satan, *the Antichrist*... God sends *the Holy Spirit* to draw men to the Savior. Likewise, Satan sends *the false prophet* to lure men to worship the Beast... God is preparing the Church as the pure, spotless *virgin bride* for His Son Jesus; whereas Satan's Beast marries a polluted, compromised religious entity that God calls *a whore!* 

One day Satan will have his own church...

Mae West entitled her autobiography, "Goodness had nothing to do with it." That'll be true of this harlot.

This "church" may carry "the name of God..." have a 501C3 non-profit status... even be seen as a charitable organization. She's a so-called "church" - supposedly a good thing - but she's holding a cup full of abomination and filthiness. Goodness has nothing to do with her.

In the words of Mae West, the whore of Babylon will say to this world, "Come up, and see me sometime."

And sadly, the world will accept her invitation.

Chapter 17 begins, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (those brimming with God's wrath) 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."

Throughout the Bible, God always speaks of Himself as "He" (a male), and His people as "She" (as female).

In the OT Yahweh is the husband and Israel is His wife. In the NT Jesus is the groom and the Church is the bride of Christ... Recall in Revelation 12 the woman with a wreath of twelve stars was God's people, Israel.

And as in a marriage, God expects fidelity and trust from His people. We're to reserve our hearts and lives and bodies for God. This is the nature of true worship.

Realize, every human being is a worshipper at heart.

You live for a reason... your own pleasure, or vice, or success, or a cause, or activity, or another person...

We're channelling our affections and ambitions in a primary direction. Whatever is at the end of that flow is the object of our worship - it's our *"functional God."* 

In the OT Yahweh demanded Israel's loyalty. In the NT Jesus expects us to reserve our hearts for Him.

And when either Israel or the Church strayed, and compromised its commitment - God interpreted it as "adultery" or "fornication." It's the betrayal of a spouse.

From God's perspective *spiritual compromise* is the equivalent to *sexual infidelity.* Both involve a sell out!

You swap your integrity, and your relationship with God, for a convenience, or a moment of pleasure - *or in the case of this harlot...* status and monetary gain.

In Revelation 19 we'll see the faithful Bride of Christ at her marriage to the Lamb. As bowls of judgment are poured out, the Church loves and worships her Savior. By this point true believers have been raptured. I love Vance Havner's advice to churchgoers, "Don't ever come to church without coming as though it was the first time, as though it could be the best time, and as though it might be the last time." *Let's be ready!* 

The *true Church* is in Heaven, while a *bogus Church* is on Earth. Unlike *God's wife* and *Christ's bride* this harlot seduces the world. She's a faith community, but she believes in the Beast. She sells her soul for a ride.

We'll see later what her beast-back ride gets her...

And notice she "sits on many waters."

In Revelation 13:1, as in other passages, the "sea" or *"many waters"* represents the vast expanse of lost humanity. This idea also gets reiterated in verse 15.

Apparently, this harlot will have a global appeal.

She'll morph into *the world's religion*. Here's "The First Church of the Beast." This is a last days church - the church after *the real Christian church* is raptured.

Current statistics show that the growth of Christianity in America has plateaued. Among 20-somethings it's in a state of decline... *But that doesn't mean people today are becoming less religious.* Religion is on an upswing!

Recently, I sat on the plane next to a lady who described herself as a "cafeteria Catholic." She picks and chooses aspects of her faith that suits her tastes.

What she finds offensive she leaves off her plate.

And this is the growing trend among Christians in general. People are rejecting the restraints of orthodox Christianity to concoct their own "designer religion."

In a 2007 Pew Research poll, 57% of people who call themselves "evangelical Christians" agreed that there are many ways to heaven, not just Christianity.

This means that six in ten professing Christians now deny the exclusivity of Christ... Like a harlot, Christians have sold out their Savior for the favors of this world.

Realize when the true Church gets raptured, there will be churches that will continue normal operations.

It'll be Sunday as usual in a lot of churches.

Not everyone who professes Christ is a genuine Christian. In Matthew 7 Jesus warns, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven..." *Profession* doesn't guarantee *possession*.

It'll be shocking, how much of Christendom will be left behind after the true believers are raptured. Liberal theologians - hypocritical church bureaucrats - appeasing, compromised pastors will all be left behind.

And once all those narrow-minded fundamentalists who took the Bible literally are out of the way - it'll be easy for the new emergent leaders to justify further compromises of the fundamental truths of Christianity.

Biblical Christianity will be gutted of its imperatives, and blended with other religious ideas. The whore of Babylon will be an all-roads lead to God movement.

This is the warning in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." And this great harlot will be the chief perpetrator of deception and demonic doctrines.

The whore of Babylon will be the ultimate triumph of tolerance and syncretism. Somehow she'll lull pseudo-Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Newagers, everyone into one ecumenical bed of belief.

If the whore of Babylon has a church bus you can bet it'll sport one of those "Coexist" bumper stickers.

Recall in Jesus' letters to the seven churches He threatened to cast heretical believers "who committed adultery... into great tribulation unless they repent."

I believe apostate Christians of both Catholic and Protestant tradition will help make up this awful harlot.

John tells us in verse 3, "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."

Revelation 13 identifies this blasphemous Beast as the Antichrist - a Future Fuhrer, the satanic Savior. This harlot rises to prominence on the back of the Beast.

Like the Christian churches in Germany who early on supported Hitler and the Nazis, the church in the Great Tribulation will sell her soul for a ride on the Beast. She'll supply the Beast with religious sanction, and in return he'll catapult her to worldly power and prestige.

It's a marriage made in Hell!

Verse 4, "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."

Understand, this harlot is no streetwalker. She's a high priced call girl. She's decked out. Her seductions and compromises have gained her a privileged status.

And she's clearly identified. Verse 5 reports, "And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Just as God has a headquarters on Earth - *the city of Jerusalem*. Satan likewise has his mission control.

People think Satan's headquarters is Hell. As if today he and his demons are huddle in a corner, over in the flames, mapping out their strategies. That couldn't be further from the truth. Hell is the last place Satan wants to be. His headquarters is on Earth. It's called *Babylon*.

Genesis 11 identifies Babel as the site of the first Satanic coup d'that - the first global revolt against God.

"Nimrod" - a man who's name means "we will rebel" - rallied mankind against God. He convinced them that even though God promised to never flood the Earth again, God couldn't be trusted. "Fear God. Trust Nimrod" was his campaign slogan. And it worked...

At Babel they built a waterproof tower in the midst of a desert. *If God tried another flood, they'd be ready.* 

Of course, along with this brazen rebellion Nimrod created his own religion. He built a tower to Heaven.

Through their own efforts mankind tried to ascend to God's place. Nimrod's followers would be as wise as God. He promised enlightenment, and self-deification.

This is Satan's promise today. You can be your own god. *We're all basically good. Look for the god within.* 

Religion still tries to build a tower to God... whether it's Judaism's Ten Commandments, or the Five Laws of Islam, or Buddhism's Four Noble Truths, or a smorgasbord of New Age manipulations, or Joseph Smith's Baloney from Maroni... Religion is all about erecting a way for man to climb above his own reach and get to God... And it all traces back to Babylon!

Over the ages and across the globe different religious theories and techniques have developed, but they're all a reflection of what started in Babylon...

How can man climb above his own reach and get to God? All religions are trying to build a tower to Heaven!

This is why the whore of the last days is called *"the mother of harlots and abomina-tions."* She's the source. And in the end all her chicks will come home to roost. All the variants of Nimrod's lie will return to mama. Verse 6 is the telling passage. John writes, "I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus..." Here's the creed of this religious harlot... "Believe in anything but Jesus!"

Everything is shown tolerance except faith in Christ.

This may be the one prophesy in Revelation that's easiest to believe. Even today, *"Jesus"* is where the world takes offense. Talk about God, and people will applaud but mention *"Jesus"* and they'll try to shut you up. Jesus is, and will be, the line of demarcation between real Christianity and this harlot's bogus brand.

John continues in verse 6, "And when I saw her (this mother of harlots), I marveled with great amazement.

But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel?

I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns." What follows is the angel's explanation.

"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." Recall Revelation 13:3...

"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast." The Antichrist

survives a lethal wound. Perhaps it's a failed assassination attempt. He appears as if he's dead, but recovers miraculously. He *"was, and is not, and yet is."* 

And I like what John adds in verse 8, "and (he'll) go to perdition." His ultimate destination is literally hellfire.

Verse 9, "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits." And in the writings of antiquity, "the city on seven hills" was synonymous with the city of Rome.

Notice verse 18 also identifies this city as *"that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."* And in John's day all the Emperors ruled from the capitol of Rome. This harlot is a religious system based in Rome.

Earlier we noted the connection between Rome and the Beast. Daniel 9, as well as other passages, inform us that the Antichrist will lead a revived Roman empire.

What's true of the Beast is true of his government...

In John's day, the Roman Empire dominated the world - it *"was."* That's before it fractured into various kingdoms - for a time it *"is not."* Now today, we see a resurgence of nations that made up ancient Rome.

The European Community is the Rome that "yet is."

And do you know the favorite symbol of the new European Community? It's a woman riding on a Beast.

Here's a German phone card...

Or the back of a 2 Euro coin...

Or a Time Magazine graphic for a United Europe...

Or the sculpture outside the European Parliament...

Or two European postage stamps...

Or a German magazine cover...

They all depict the image we find in Revelation 17. This last days harlot seems to make its *home* in *Rome*.

And of course, what worldwide religious system is headquartered today in Rome? The Roman Catholic Church. And this is the observation that's led many folks to connect this harlot with Roman Catholicism.

What makes this even more provocative is that over the centuries Roman Catholic religion has integrated many pagan and Babylonian practices into its tradition.

The Pope's title "Pontiff Maximus" or "High Priest" was a name taken from the Babylonian priesthood.

Practices like the use of icons, the celibacy of priests and nuns, purgatory, lent, holy water, the mass, the veneration of Mary, salvation by sacrament... can all be traced to Babylonian paganism - not the Bible! This is why I am a Protest-tant! There is much to protest...

Yet, do I believe the harlot in Revelation 17 is the Roman Catholic Church? No! The whore of Babylon will be broader than any particular church or religion.

It's an amalgamation of religions - a global religion - that's used by the Antichrist to seduce the world.

Verse 10 tells us, "There are also seven kings." Not only are the seven heads seven hills, they also represent seven kings. "Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come." Five world-spanning empires preceded the first century and John's writing of Revelation: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece.

The world empire that existed at the time was Rome.

But there is one more world empire yet to come...

John writes "And when he comes, he must continue a short time." When the Antichrist unifies a fractured world under the auspices of a new Rome, his reign is brief. Daniel 9 tells us it'll last but seven years - a drop in the bucket compared to the previous six empires.

Verse 11, "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition." The seventh beast is the new Rome. The eighth is it's leader - the Antichrist himself.

"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." The Antichrist will establish ten provinces. He'll appoint subordinates to help him. *But they won't reign long...* 

Don't waste your time looking at today's political landscape for this configuration. This happens towards the end, and these kings don't last long - a single hour.

Verse 13, "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast." These ten kings drink the Kool-Aid. They sell their soul to the Beast. Yet talk about hitching your wagon to the wrong horse...

These kings find themselves in a fearful position.

Verse 14, "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." The Beast and his ten buddies are Jesus' foe at the Battle of Armageddon.

God put down Nimrod and the first Babylonian revolt by confusing the languages and dispersing the people.

He destroys the final Babel by gathering the nations into the Plain of Meggido to *"make war with the Lamb."* 

We'll read the play-by-play of that battle next week...

"Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues." The harlot will cast a worldwide web.

Verse 16, "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."

Irony of ironies, the Beast and his buddies will turn on the harlot. After they use her up, they'll spit her out.

Here's a pseudo-Christian Church that ceased being Christian to appease the world and avoid persecution.

And where did it get her? Naked, eaten, burned...

Realize the Church is never stronger, and more spiritually successful, than when it stands on the truth.

## Here's the possible progression...

For the first half of the final seven years the Antichrist is hailed as a man of peace. Jews and Arabs get along. The false prophet and the religious harlot spread his message... *all roads lead to God... everyone coexist...* 

But at the midpoint, the Antichrist reveals his true colors. He defiles the Temple in Jerusalem and claims to be God. The harlot is no longer needed. From now on the only religion allowed is the worship of the Beast.

And to secure that worship he blackmails the world. To participate in his commercial system you need his mark in your right hand or forehead - the number 666. Those who refuse, *starve to death* or *get put to death*.

Verse 17, "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. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." In John's day the only city to fit that description would be Rome.

So... The Antichrist will rule the world. He'll establish a global government headquartered in a new Rome... But two Babylons help bring him to power...

Chapter 17 has spotlighted a religious Babylon.

Chapter 18 focuses on a commercial Babylon. Total rule requires the control of both *religion* and *economy.* 

Chapter 18 begins, "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." Remember, Babylon is *Satan central.* 

Babylon isn't just a city, it's a system. It's a trap the devil uses to deceive and manipulate. He entices the world through *religion* and *riches*. Babel is about both.

Here we're told it was Babylon's wealth that enticed the world to worship at the altar of the Antichrist. The nations drank her spiritual fornication and became rich.

It's no surprise that the nations of the world will sell out principle for profit... Give people *more entitlements, new jobs, lower interest rates, peace and prosperity* - and they'll overlook a sinister spiritual agenda.

The Antichrist will usher in an age of opulence, and the nations will sell their soul for a piece of the pie.

I hope you're not the type of person who trades godliness for greed? Would you compromise spiritually to get ahead financially? It's alarming the concessions some Christians will make for one more lousy dollar.

Let's make sure we're free from the love of money.

Recall Jesus in Matthew 6, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

If forced to make the choice... would you choose devotion to God or the luxuries of this world?

Verse 4, "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

Just as God called the righteous folks out of Sodom before judgment came down here He warns the world of the pending destruction of Babylon. A gracious God offers the world a chance to repent of its materialism...

"For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." God has scrutinized Babylon's books. He's noted her every transaction.

Every workplace injustice - every employee who was abused - every sweat shop - every time the currency was manipulated for someone's financial advantage.

Every time profit took precedent over people.

God took note, and now He says, "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her." Babylon bellies up to the bar, and God orders her a double shot of His wrath!

Heaven adds, "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow..." The rich of this world who've made a

fortune off the backs of neglected workers - beware! You'll be treated as you've treated others.

We've heard what *heaven is saying*, but here's what Babylon is thinking, "For she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

Therefore her plagues will come in one day - death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her." Wow! The commercial titans of this world will be judged *"in one day"* - suddenly and comprehensively!

And they'll be *"utterly burned with fire."* Could it be the commercial centers of the world will get nuked?

Verse 9, "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment..." Why are the kings standing at a distance?

Perhaps they're afraid of the radiation fallout.

They're "saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come." How can a huge metropolis be burned to a crisp in one hour? It would take a cataclysmic blast.

"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her (the Warren Buffets and Donald Trumps), for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men."

Notice, John says the world in the last days will be trading in the *"bodies and souls of men."* Today, millions of people are trapped in some form of slavery.

Human trafficking is a modern-day problem. Let's support those who're shining a light into this darkness.

Verse 14, "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all." It's a good reminder for us that all the material stuff – *the house, car, antique furniture - the baseball card collection* - it's all going to burn one day! I hope you're investing in what will last forever.

"The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls

For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.'

Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'" *Babylon is fallen.* 

Here a specific city is in view... Is it Rome? Is it NY? Is it another of the world's leading economic centers? Or is it actual Babylon? Saddam rebuilt a slither of ancient Babylon... US troops used it as a camp in the Iraqi War... Today, Babel is a fledging tourist attraction.

Perhaps one day Babylon will be rebuilt. With it's strategic location and oil reserves it could rise again.

Yet whether a city or a system, Babylon will be known - not for its rise - but its fall. What was predicted in 14:8 by the second angel who canvassed the globe, is fulfilled here, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen."

And "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

But while Earth mourns, Heaven celebrates. Verse 20, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

The Beast and business collaborated. To buy or sell you needed a mark. To get it you had to bow. Now the commercial system that persecuted God's people gets her retribution. She'll suffer what she dished out.

Verse 21, "Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea..." A millstone was a symbol of ancient commerce and business.

Yet here the millstone is thrown into the sea... God is tired of man's greed. *Greed is not good.* Greed is a sin.

If capitalism means an investment of funds to grow businesses, and create jobs, and provide goods and services for the betterment of society... *God is for it!* 

But if capitalism means the rich exploiting workers and padding their pockets at the expense of the poor... *God is against it!* He'll bury it at the bottom of the sea.

And the angel said, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore.

No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore." Babylon will no longer be *business* as usual. World markets and corporations will all be interrupted by God's judgment!

I graduated from Georgia State with a degree in business administration. GSU is one of the finest business schools in the South. I was there for four years, yet nobody ever had me read Revelation 18.

Yet they should have! For God not only judges governments, and churches - but also businesses. He cares about business leaders and their practices.

Verse 23, "For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived." What an indictment! The merchants of the world - big business - is accused of *the sin of sorcery.* 

When does an advertiser go beyond the boundaries of truthfulness and engage in willful manipulation?

Sometimes advertisements border on hypnotic.

Here's an ad for wrinkle removal... give me a break!

Is it moral to advertise alcohol, and never warn of addiction? Or use marketing that targets children? *And we all know that sex sells,* but does that make it right? Don't be deceived. Those who use lust, and lies, and greed, and covetousness to market it's products are as guilty as those who succumb to the temptations.

One day God will weigh in on all these questions and have His say in the evaluation of business practices.

Don't tell God "to mind His own business." The world will discover that His authority extends to all business.

And finally, verse 24, "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth." The Babylon in view could be Rome.

The Roman Colosseum was the slaughterhouse of the martyrs... Rome's catacombs were their tombs.

Ancient Rome was guilty of the blood of the saints.

But in the last days the whole world will be swayed by the Beast and Babel - *it'll all* share its punishment.

Which brings us to Chapter 19... Jesus is coming back *next week!* Next Sunday night at CC we'll study the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! Don't miss it...

Don't miss next Sunday - and don't miss Jesus!

Bow your heart to only Him. Give Him your life, your time, your stuff, your money... He's King of the Jungle!