***Jerusalem

RV208-02***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 17. We now begin a new chapter of the book of the Revelation. Our subject is "Ecclesiastical Babylon," and this is segment number one.

Revelation 17 and 18 are a combination unit. They are devoted once more to some expanded specific background information. These two chapters, Revelation 17-18, are devoted to the description of the divine destruction of Babylon, not only the city itself, but to that which this city has produced in the form of an ecclesiastical unit and ecclesiastical viewpoint, and also a political, commercial viewpoint. So, Revelation 17 deals with the destruction of what Babylon produced ecclesiastically, and Revelation 18 will tell us about God's destruction of what Babylon has produced politically and economically.

The events of Revelation 17-18 do not chronologically follow upon Revelation 16. So, immediately you must shift gears. We have come at the end of Revelation 16 to the end of the bowl judgments, where it is simply not possible for human life to continue on this earth. The final devastating impact of the bowl judgments near the closing weeks of the tribulation require the immediate return of Jesus Christ in order for humanity to survive.

These chapters are going to give us some extended information of God's judgment upon ecclesiastical and economic, political Babylon, which take place before the bowl judgments. So, sometime, preceding Revelation 16, Revelation 17 and 18 will be fulfilled by God. Probably, these two chapters go back in their ultimate description very near to the beginning of the tribulation seven-year period.

So, while everything revealed to the apostle John in the book of the Revelation was future for him, it was not always revealed, as we have found, in strict chronological order. God the Holy Spirit had reasons for the arrangement that He followed. So, Revelation 17 and 18 are going to backtrack again before Revelation the 16 and the final blows against the tribulation world.

**Ecclesiastical Babylon**

Revelation 17 deals with Babylon as an ecclesiastical entity – a false religion, or a false church. There is in the world today an ancient system of an evil religion which was created by Satan to oppose God. This ancient system of evil religion (false religion) has a variety of expressions, but it all has a common origin and a common base. The religious system has for millennia led an organized rebellion against the authority of God and against His word. Every false religion and every attack upon biblical truth, and upon the God of the Bible, is an expression of something that began in the dim past, thousands of years ago, on the plains of Shinar between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

**"Cosmos Diabolicus"**

This religious system is an invention of Satan, and it is part of Satan's world system which we refer to sometimes by the Latin words "Cosmos Diabolicus." "Cosmos" means "the world," and "Diabolicus" means "Satan" – the world of Satan, or the system of the world. The Bible speaks about the world. And when the Bible speaks about the world of Satan, it is speaking about a system (an organization) – a structure by which things are done. It is a diabolic world system: the "Cosmos Diabolicus." This is actually the system that Jesus was referring to when He spoke in John 15:18-19. Jesus said, "If the world (if the 'Cosmos Diabolicus') hates you, you know that has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the 'Cosmos Diabolicus,' the 'Cosmos Diabolicus' would love its own, but because you are not of the 'Cosmos Diabolicus,' but I chose you out of the 'Cosmos Diabolicus,' therefore the 'Cosmos Diabolicus' hates you."

The world is a creation of Satan. I keep repeating that phrase in order to impact upon your mind that we are dealing with something that is a system that we're all living with. Every time you deal economically, you're dealing with a satanic system; when you deal politically, you're dealing with a satanic system; when you deal socially, or with society of one kind or another, you're dealing with a satanic system; and, when you deal with the institutions of education, you're dealing with the system that Satan has put together. The whole world through which you move is a system which Satan has diabolically put together. Jesus says, "Don't expect yourself to be welcomed in that world."

Well, that's a problem: "I want something from the world. I want its esteem. I want some gift from it. I want some position of power from this world. But the world hates Jesus Christ, and if I'm true to Jesus Christ, it's going to certainly hate me. How am I going to work in a world system to secure its favors, and to secure desires from it, when it hates my innards because it hates Christ? And because we are not of the world system, we're not even in step with it. We're not even in tune with it. God has chosen us out of this diabolical system, and therefore, the world hates us, because we're not part of that.

When the world discovers that you don't use their lousy language, they're not going to be kindly disposed toward you. When the world discovers that you don't share their dirty mentality viewpoints and jokes, they're not going to be kindly disposed toward you. When the world discovers that you will not play their deceits, and, in fact, that you will hold their sin up to exposure of the Word of God, they're going to be very much distressed with you. When the world discovers that you consider yourself an outsider and a pilgrim, detached from the world system, and actually a citizen of the Most High God, and of heaven itself, the world is not going to be disposed to treat you kindly and to reward you for that attitude of separation.

It is this "Cosmos Diabolicus" that now comes in for special divine destruction in Revelation 17 and 18. What you have here is the detailed description where a God of laws, after millennia of standing by and waiting, finally calls in His markers. He has kept marking down the evil, and He's kept taking your chips, and He's kept holding your IOUs to Him. And finally, on the system that Satan has put together ecclesiastical in the world (and economically and politically), the collapse comes. Nobody should be in religious or public life who does not understand Revelation 17 and 18. That's the only way you will understand the system in which we move, and which Satan has created.

The religion of ancient Babylon is today sweeping the world in full force. It is being promoted by government leaders, as it was in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. The Babylon religion finds its many expressions from that which is very crude, to that which is very sophisticated. But it is all anti-biblical, and it is all condemned by God.

So, in Revelation 17, we first look at the final destruction of ecclesiastical Babylon. God has had His fill of this system, which He has tolerated from the early dawn of human history, in the attempt of Satan to produce a system of religion that is acceptable to mankind and that blesses mankind. Remember that all of this is done under the desire of being compassionate. All of this is done in order to help people. Satan does not run around trying to do things so that people say, "It is terrible what we get when we deal with Satan." Well, it is, but he wants to give the impression that he's the good guy, and that he is compassionate, and that he is for meeting human needs.

**An Angel**

So, in Revelation 17:1-2, we read of an angelic invitation, and verse 1 is a call to the apostle John: One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls." The seven angels who had the seven bowls containing the final judgments of the wrath of God have now performed their mission. The bowls are empty, and one of these angels who had one of these bowls is now going to come over to guide John through the next stage of his vision. This is a vision which is now going to backtrack. It's going to have a flashback to an earlier part of the period of revelation, where God is getting ready to destroy the ecclesiastical structure of Babylon.

This angel says to John, "Come here, and I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters:" "Come here, and I'm going to show you a judgment." This judgment is referring to a special act of God. It is a judgment that has been held in abeyance for many millennia. God is now going to call in His IOUs. This harlot is described as one who is great. He is going to show John someone that he calls in the Greek language "porne." "Porne" is not a nice word. It means "harlot." It means "prostitute." It is a very ugly word. This is a very bad connotation in the Word of God. What it refers to is one who exerts a seductive influence on others to practice sexual immorality.

This, of course, is one of the great impacts of Satan upon our world today – the practice of sexual immorality. And only the utmost kind of fool thinks that you can break the rules of God, and the orderliness of sexual relationships, and get away with it. This word "porne," however, is used here in terms of a great harlot who is spiritually unfaithful. The context here, we will see, deals with spiritual unfaithfulness to God, and to the Word of God. So, it is used in the spiritual sense of those who claim a relationship to the true God, but who in fact are untrue to Him. These are people who can claim a relationship to the true God, and then they can go to the extreme of worshiping idols.

This can be done in a more subtle way (a lesser way) – to play the harlot with God. You can claim a relationship to Him, and you can claim a loyalty to Jesus Christ, and then you act in a way that is absolutely opposite to that. You are not loyal to Him. You are in fact disloyal to Him in your life. You are downright immoral. You are open to false doctrine. You are non-supportive of the work of God. You abandon what God is doing. You turn your back upon Him. You fail to be supportive of the thing that is most important in your life, which is the work of God. In a way, you begin to play the role of someone who is claiming to be a follower of God, but who is proving to be untrue.

This is a very vivid picture in the Old Testament. For you to understand Revelation 17 and 18, it is necessary for you to get a strong understanding of the mind of God – an emotional relationship that God has toward the concept of spiritual unfaithfulness (spiritual harlotry). In the Old Testament, "Yahweh" (God) is portrayed as Israel's husband. You will notice in Isaiah 54:4-8 that this is so presented. That was the relationship of God to the people of Israel. He viewed them as His wife, and therefore, He treated them as His wife. Therefore, we are now in a wife-husband relationship, and therefore, we are now in a position of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Here, the analogy is in terms of spiritual things.

Isaiah 54:4 (speaking to the Jewish people): Fear not, for you will not be put to shame, neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced, but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your husband is your maker." Israel had been out of fellowship with God. She's been under His judgment. She's been, as it were, a widow, instead of having a husband who has taken care of her, and a husband who is carrying her along; a husband who is providing for her; and, a husband who is meeting her emotional and all of her physical needs. Israel, suddenly, because of her sin, has found herself abandoned by God. She has found herself with a husband who says, "Fine, if that's how you want to live, go it yourself, and see where that leads you." Now God is comforting Israel as He is bringing the nation back to himself.

Verse 5: "For your husband is your maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and your redeemers is the holy one of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you like a wife, forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth, when she is rejected, says, 'Your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion, I will gather you.'" God says, "Yes, because of your sin, the time came when I had to separate from you. Your spiritual harlotries became so horrendous." And we shall see in some detail in a moment how horrendous those were. God said, "There came a time when I simply separated from you."

That's what happens. You have somebody in a marriage relationship who turns into an unfaithful dog. The time comes when that cannot continue. While that doesn't give us justification, ordinarily, perhaps for divorce, it does give justification for separation for a variety of reasons. But God said, "I never forgot you. I never stopped loving you, and I've never lost my heart of compassion for you. And now the time has come when I'm going to restore you."

Verse 8 says, "'In an outburst of anger, I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness, I will have compassion on you,' says the Lord, our redeemer." So, the nation of Israel, who had been spiritually unfaithful to God her husband. God set her aside, and now He's calling her back. And God, the Creator and husband of Israel, promises to restore her to her former place. He forgives the unfaithful wife, Israel, and now He has compassion on her because He is always faithful to her. God's relationship to Israel is permanent, just as marriage is permanent. While the wife, Israel, has not been true to Him, He has ultimately brought her back to Himself, and the relationship is there.

In Jeremiah 31:32, God promises that Israel will be permanently restored to her full standing eventually with God as His wife. He is referring here to a new covenant that He will make with Israel: "'Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers (the Mosaic covenant) in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt (the covenant that depended upon their own performance for blessing); My covenant, which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord." He goes on to tell how He's going to give them a new covenant, and it'll be a new covenant as a new marriage vow. And Israel will be permanently restored to her place as Jehovah's wife because she will be spiritually cleansed.

**Jerusalem**

Please turn to Ezekiel 16. I'm going to give you an emotional jag and shock, as Ezekiel the prophet, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, tries to make clear what spiritual harlotry is, and how loathsome this is to God. I think with this chapter as background, you will understand why God proceeds to do what He does to the religious systems of the world today, which were created way back in Babylon. Ezekiel 16, is a parable in which Jerusalem is viewed as the harlot wife of God.

Ezekiel 16:1, "Then the Word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations." Ezekiel is directed by God to go to the people of Jerusalem – this city which will eventually be God's central headquarters for His kingdom on earth. He tells Ezekiel, "I want you to make a historical review of what I actually did for this city, and I want you to present it under the analogy of an infant found abandoned." That's the background of the picture here.

Verse 3: "And say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite. Your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite.'" So, Jerusalem is portrayed as a half-breed (a mixed breed). Jerusalem itself was inhabited by a group of people that were called the Jebusites, which seem to be closely related to the Amorites and the Hittites. Thus we have Jerusalem's background origin – the mixture of the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the Hittites. So, Jerusalem does not have a very good pedigree. She does not have a very good family ancestry.

Verse 4: "As for your birth, on the day you were born, your naval cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing. You were not rubbed with salt, or even wrapped in cloths." Jerusalem, the half-breed infant is totally ignored at birth. This child was born, and nobody wants to touch it. This loathsome little half-breed creature, instead of having the navel (the umbilical cord) cut mercifully, as is to be done, and instead of the child being washed with water (to be cleansed), and instead of the child being rubbed, as was done with salt to firm up the skin, and instead of being wrapped now in clothing for warmth, it is simply abandoned.

Verse 5 says, "No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day that you were born." God says, "There was nothing attractive about Jerusalem sitting up on top of that hill called Zion – nothing in the world. Nobody cared a thing about her.

In Verse 6, somebody comes into the picture. Enter almighty God: "When I passed by you, and I saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you, while you were in your blood." God walks by and looks down the side of the road. Here's the picture – the analogy. He sees this abandoned infant squirming, and struggling for life, and indeed destined to die if something is not done: "I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live.'" God says, "Don't die, but instead live." And God proceeded to take actions to make Jerusalem, who was about to pass off the scene of human history as a nothing, to be made something dramatic.

Verse 7 says, "I made you numerous like the plants of the field;" that is, as plants become mature, they multiply and they grow, and this is an analogy such that God said, "I took you; cleaned you up; and, cared for you, and you began to grow into maturity. This is a female child, as we shall see. In time: "You grew up. You became tall. You reached the age for fine ornaments. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown, yet you were naked and bare." Jerusalem grew into maturity. She grew into a young woman in the analogy, and yet, she was still destitute. She had nothing. She was naked and bare. This is not a very attractive condition in which to live. She was in a primitive status.

Verse 8: "'Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love. (You had reached marriageable age.) So, I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. And I also swore to you, and entered into a covenant with you, so that you became Mine,' declares the Lord God." This was the custom – spreading the garment ceremoniously over one that one is pledging to be an engagement to, and to be betrothed to. This was the ceremony that was performed in the book of Ruth. Here, the picture is that God performs this act of indicating: "I'm going to take you, Jerusalem, as a man takes a young, virgin woman to be his wife. And I have sworn to My fidelity and My covenant of faithfulness and truth in dealing with you." Historically, this was done for Jerusalem probably when God made that city officially the capital city of His kingdom on this earth.

In verses 9-14, we now have a very tender description of God lovingly caring for the neglected, unwanted, and unclothed Jerusalem, to whom He has now betrothed Himself: "Then I bathed you with water; washed off your blood from you; and, anointed you with oil." He washes her; He perfumes her; and, He clothes her with queenly attire from head to foot: "I also clothed you with embroidered cloth; put sandals of fine leather upon your feet; I wrapped you with fine linen; and, I covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments; put bracelets on your hands; and, a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril; earrings in your ears; and, a beautiful crown on your head."

After God had dressed her as a queen, He then proceeded to adorn her with jewelry. All of this is the description of how Jerusalem gradually became a magnificent, beautiful city of the ancient world that reached its Venus under the reign of Solomon – a symbol of the fact that under both David and Solomon, the Jews were true to God, so God bless them outwardly in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, verse 13 says, "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. And you ate fine flower, honey, and oil so that you were exceedingly beautiful, and advanced to royalty." God also gave her the choices of foods to eat – foods that were healthy, and foods that increased her external beauty and her physical well-being.

So, what you see here is that everything that Jerusalem could need or want was lavished upon her generously by her faithful husband, God. She was a queen, and furthermore, she became such a magnificent queen, in terms of being a city, that she became renowned throughout the world.

Verse 14 says, "'Then your fame went fourth among the nations on account of your beauty. For it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,' declares the Lord God." Can you put yourself perhaps emotionally into the position of someone that has been treated like that? She has been taken from an infant; her life has been preserved; she has been reared and brought to maturity; and, then she was taken as the tender wife of someone who has cared for her, and has given her everything that she needs. And now she is indeed a person of royalty; a person of great dignity; and, a person whom people respect and look up to and honor, with a husband who is true to you. That's the picture.

What we're talking about is harlotry. We're talking about spiritual unfaithfulness. This is what God did for the city of Jerusalem. Of course, when we say that, we mean for the Jews who possess that city.

Now notice what develops in verses 15-19. This young woman, who had been operating on God's viewpoint, now found things so good for her that she found it easier to go off into "Cosmos Diabolicus," and to start thinking in terms of the human viewpoint of the world. How often have I seen this? People are prospered by God, and they lose their way in spiritual things. People who would always be here in church, taking notes and paying attention, and when they got enough money and enough prosperity and enough fame and fortune, they were too busy to be here, because they thought they had enough to ride on, and they didn't have to be here. So, they knew a lot about God, but they had no relationship to Him whatsoever. They played the fool. They played the harlot. This is a serious matter. Christians can be spiritual harlots, and we have plenty of them around, and some in our own midst. You should know the fact that because the sin nature is basically the same, none of us is immune to this.

Verse 15: "But you trusted in your beauty, and you played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotry on every passerby who might be willing." Suddenly, this queen Jerusalem, who had been so elevated, and who had been treated so faithfully by God, began looking over there, and saw the religious system of the pagans – the system that had not been entirely snuffed out by their forebears as God had directed them to do. They saw the gods, and they saw the phallic practices. They saw the sex cult religion. They saw all of the things that appealed to the senses. The people of Jerusalem kept looking over there at the Philistine and the Canaanite cultures, and all of the degeneracy that still existed around them and their full religious system – the religious system that had come from the distant past of the river Euphrates, from the city of Babylon.

Here, Jerusalem, basking in her beauty, and proud of her fame, now begins to practice spiritual harlotry. She begins to practice the evils that the very pagans around her, that God had destroyed, were practicing: "And you took some of your clothes; made for yourself high places of various colors; and, played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen." Jerusalem had around itself certain hills that were devoted to being made attractive, as with reclining places, so that the gods could be worshiped with illicit sexual acts. But here the analogy is not physical, but the analogy is spiritual. You made the religious systems look very attractive:

"You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold." You took what I gave you. You took the various provisions that I had given to you when you had nothing: "And My silver which I had given you, and made for yourself male images, that you might play the harlot with them." They descended to the fact where material images were made as objects for sexual activity. This spiritual harlot actually continued historically from Solomon to the Babylonian captivity. You have to get the perspective that the Jews never let up on this once they began playing the spiritual prostitute with the religions around them. The Jerusalem Jews took the very material things that God has blessed them with, and on the hills of worship, they used them as objects for the phallic cult worship (the sex cult worship) of their gods.

Verse 18 says, "Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them." They used the very blessings of God to be instruments of perverted sex acts: "'And My bread which I gave you, and fine flour and oil and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma. So, it happened,' declares the Lord God." They used the food that God had given them as offering to the gods.

This is a subtle thing. This is what you commonly seen in oriental cultures. They stand before the altar of their ancestors, and they're bowing, and they're putting food out. And even among Christians, customs develop as Babylon's religion gets inserted, and who knows how?

I can remember as a child, in a standard, solid reformation religious system, coming to Christmas Eve dinner, and being given a little, flat, round cake. It was very tasty – honey-like. It was maybe six or seven inches across. And this was to be eaten with honey. It was something of a delicacy. But before you ate of it, you had to break off a piece of it, and put it in a dish in the center of the table for the angels. Even as a teenager, something told me: "What angels? Do angels even need this? I need this, but I don't know about the angels. I may even need that bite that I'm handing off to the angels. But the demons were probably behind this. What are we talking about?

We're talking about this "Cosmos Diabolicus" – a religious system that recognizes evil and treats it as the reality greater than God. These people were worshiping the ancestors. They were worshiping the demon spirits with the very food that God had given to them. Moreover, all of these things are vivid physical pictures which portray the spiritual adultery of the Jerusalem Jews in worshiping the pagan deities.

Now, if that wasn't bad enough, once you start off into the religion of "Cosmos Diabolicus," it becomes heady stuff. You can lose your way because you've gotten out of touch with the things of God by being stupid enough, for example, by not attending our church services, and filling these seats every Sunday, and keeping your brain and your ears open to what you need morning and evening to carry you through this world, until you find it all hits you in some crisis, and you wonder what it's all about, and you decide to shoot your brains out or something.

These people had lost all sense of decency, and had lost all sense of morality. In verse 20 to 22, we have a gross description of the people of Jerusalem offering their children as human sacrifices to the gods of Canaan. This was food to the gods.

Verse 20: "Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had born to Me, and you had sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? Was it so small a thing that you should have been spiritually unfaithful to Me, that now you took the children that I permitted you to conceive, and which were therefore Mine, and always were mine, on temporary loan to you to rear into godly maturity for My service?" It wasn't enough that you were spiritually unfaithful to Me. Did you even take the children to be used in your spiritual luxury? You slaughtered My children, and offered them up as idols by causing them to pass through the fire."

**Sacrificing Children to Gods**

"What he's talking about is a God like Molech, who was a god who was created with a fat belly Buddha-like structure, in which there was an opening. And inside that inside that stomach was a grate in which an intense fire which was ignited. When it was burning, and at a certain point of frenzy, parents would take their infant children and throw them through the opening of the belly, through the navel, as it were, into the fire. And they would get great pleasure as the children would scream in agony as they would be burned alive. This was offering food to the gods that they were now worshiping.

You haven't lost track, have you, of the infant cast aside by the side of the road, left to die – taken all the way to royalty by God. Do you see the grossness of being unfaithful spiritually to God? "Besides all your abominations and your harlotries, you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood. You forgot what I had done for you."

Child sacrifice was openly practice in the Ezekiel's day, as child sacrifice is openly practiced in our day to the tune of 1.6 million children in abortion slaughtered annually today. Hey, how about that? If you want to get some favor from our society; if you want to get some recognition; and, if you want to get some position of power, but our society says, "We want you to legalize this; we want you to justify this; and, we want you to allow unborn children to be murdered." And you are a Christian. What are you going to do? You should say, "Well, then I don't want your position of authority and power." But are you going to say, "Well, I guess I'll see what I can do for you? I think we should all have choice."

Spiritual harlotry had made Jerusalem so vile that she had forgotten how her husband, God, had saved her from death as an infant when she was thrown away to die.

In verses 23-29, the City of Jerusalem developed an ever increasing lust for idols, and indifference toward her husband, God, so that she degenerated spiritually to unbelievable levels: "'Then it came about, after all your wickedness. Woe, woe to you,' declares the Lord God, 'that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square." It was not enough that here harlotry had been practiced on the hills around Jerusalem. Mow it says, "You went and made every street corner a shrine – a place where you could practice prostitution." Harlotry moved from the special hills of lust to the intersection of every street – signs for sexual worship of the foreign gods: "You built yourself a high place at the top of every street, and made your beauty abominable. You spread your legs to every passerby to multiply your harlotry." Ezekiel is hopping mad now. He speaks very plainly, and he is creating pictures that are shocking to the mind because he wants you to understand that you're dealing with a God who is going to call in His markers. If you play this game, you'll pay the price.

Jerusalem couldn't get enough satisfaction with the worship of her foreign gods, so she deliberately sought them out to give herself to anyone who would come along: "You also played, therefore, harlots with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry." She insulted God by worshiping the gods of Egypt – those gods that God had so squashed and humiliated when He brought their forefathers out of slavery. He had freedom from those gods. Now, here is this woman saying, "I'm worshiping the very gods that you freed our forbearers from. What are you going to do about it, buddy?" When you have a woman like that, you have a bad scene on your hands.

God did not stand by, however, like a helpless ninny, while His wife, Jerusalem, debased herself with spiritual harlotry. God imposed discipline on Jerusalem to bring her to her senses. He reduced the territory that she governed, and put her in the conquest of the Philistines.

Verse 22: "Behold, now I have stretched out my hand against you and diminished your rations (your territory), and I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct." Now, how's that for a sentence? The Philistines are watching what you're doing in your religious practices; your phallic cult contact; and, your spiritual infidelity to God, and the Philistine women are ashamed of what they see you do. Believe me, they were no virtuous characters at all. There were no virtuously victorious people among the Philistines. They were strictly low-life, but it embarrassed them to see what the Jews were doing. Even the vile Philistines were shocked by the lewdness of the spiritual adultery of Jerusalem, and they felt shame for Jerusalem. At least the Philistines could claim to be faithful to their gods, false as they were.

"Moreover, you play the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied. You even played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied." She played a harlot with the Assyrians, and couldn't get enough of their gods. Verse 29: "You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants ("Chaldea"). Yet, even with this you were not satisfied." They went to the Chaldeans, and yet their gods would not satisfy, with all their lewd practices.

Finally, in verses 30-34, Jerusalem hits the bottom. She degenerates to the point where, instead of being paid as a prostitute, she begins paying people to accept her as a prostitute – supporting the financing of the idol gods. Verse 30: "'How languishing is your heart,' declares the Lord God, 'While you do all these things – the actions of a bold-faced harlot? When you build your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your place in every square, in disdaining money, you were not like a harlot. You adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband." She was so degenerate that as a bold-faced harlot, she flaunts what she is doing in the face of God her husband. Jerusalem scorned payment for prostitution, Jerusalem, in her spiritual adultery, preferred sex with strangers instead of her husband:

"Men give gifts all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers, to bribe them to come to you from every direction in your harlotry." Now, keep attaching this to spiritual generosity. That's what's happening. This is what Babylon has produced. This is the religious system, so that you get an idea of how revolted and angry and wrathful God is. Jerusalem became a total spiritual nymphomania without any reason guiding her action, and without any more controls. She began bribing potential lovers to come to her from all directions, and her total pursuit was false deities, and all the vile practices of worship that was associated with them. The Jews, in effect, we're trying to buy the false God to bless them and their city, Jerusalem, as God had blessed them when He was their husband.

Verse 34: "They are surely different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money, and no money is given to you. Thus, you are different."

In verse 35-43, Jerusalem goes from being a queen to being a tramp and madly rushes to her destruction: "Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord." God is determined now to deliver Jerusalem into the hands of the nations whose gods she has pursued, to let them destroy her.

Verse 36: "Thus says the Lord God, 'Because your lewdness was poured out, and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers, and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons, which you gave to idols, therefore, behold, I shall gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved, and all those whom you hated. So, I shall gather them against you from every direction, and expose your nakedness to them, that they may all see your nakedness." Jerusalem is now going to strip bare. She is again going to stand naked and helpless as she was when God found her. God has applied the divine penalty against adultery. In the ancient times, that penalty was death by stoning and by sword:

"Thus, I will judge you, like women who commit adultery or shed blood or judge. And I shall bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy. I shall also give you into the hands of your lovers. They will tear down your shrines; demolish your high places; strip you of your clothing; take away your jewels; and, leave you naked and bare. They will incite a crowd against you, and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their sword."

God said, "Furthermore, I'm going to burn you down to the ground, Jerusalem. They will burn your houses with fire, and execute judgment on you in sight of many women. Then I shall stop you from playing the harlot, and you also will no longer pay your lovers." Of course, Babylon came in under Nebuchadnezzar, led by God, to do that very thing – burn Jerusalem. That brought an end to Jerusalem's spiritual unfaithfulness. In fact, following the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, the Jews never again played the harlot with idols. They never again turned to idol gods. God's wrath against spiritual harlotry would be satisfied, and Jerusalem's evil permanently stopped.

So, verse 42 says, "I shall be calm. My fury against you and my jealousy depart from you, and I shall be pacified and angry no more." God said, "I will come to the end of My anger."

Verse 43 concludes, "'Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but having enraged me by all these things, Behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head,' declares the Lord God, 'so that you will not commit this lewdness on the top of all your other abominations. God said, "You didn't remember from when I brought you, and because you have been untrue to Me; untrue to My moral laws; and, untrue to My will for you, I brought it all down on your head. Once a nation forgets God, who is the source of its blessings, and of its national elevation, as Israel did, then there is nothing to expect but total destruction.

This grim picture in Ezekiel 16 is where the United States is today. It is where our society is today. It is a society which has accepted the religion of Babylon with all of its gross expressions in various ways. One person who was a visitor last week wondered how we could get an administration in Washington that is devoted to all the elements of Babylonian religion and Babylonian economic and governmental principles. I reminded him that no one gets into public office except by God's appointment. Therefore, the unbelievable indeed did happen last November in the United States. My interpretation and my expression to him was that God is on the move. God has placed in that position that which is necessary now to bring down upon the United States of America which God eventually, in time past, finally brought down upon Jerusalem. God is going to call in His markers against this nation. Beware that He has no markers to call in on you. Playing the spiritual harlot is a dangerous, dangerous game.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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