

“These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate”

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IN THE Book of Revelation’s startling depiction of “the great whore” (17:1; 19:2) and the events surrounding her downfall, the Brotherhood has long since looked for a fulfilment involving the false ‘Christianity’ of Europe with the Roman Catholic Church as its self-appointed head. Yet the description of her condemnation is not limited to the religious aspects of the system she represents. Indeed, those who lament her fall in Revelation 18 are not the religious leaders of the day at all. True, her spiritual sins are made plain, for “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (v. 24). Similarly, her destruction is to be seen by God’s apostles and prophets as an act of judgement on their behalf (v. 20). However, the overwhelming grief expressed at her passing comes principally

from the lips of the merchants and traders of the earth (vv. 11,15,17). Clearly, therefore, the Spirit wishes us to have in view here more than the Roman Catholic Church alone. This can be seen from the Biblical use of the symbol of the harlot, explored in the article on page 19.

We see the origins of the harlot of Revelation 18 earlier in the prophecy with John’s vision of a pregnant woman “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1). The heavenly bodies are used in Scripture as symbols of rulership, on the basis of God’s intent at Creation that they were to “rule the day, and . . . rule the night,” God setting them “in the firmament of the heaven” (Gen. 1:16,17). Thus the woman “in heaven” in Revelation is in some way in a position of rulership. At

the end of chapter 12 she disappears for a time, being given wings to “fly into the wilderness” (v. 14), still under threat from the great red dragon, who then delegates his powers of persecution to the beast of the sea (12:17; 13:1,2).

So, when John sees a woman coming *out of* the wilderness seated on a later phase of this beast, we realise that this must be the same woman—but what a change we see in her! From nothing more than a hint of unchastity in chapter 17 (she being with child), she is now an all-out prostitute. And she has more than made up her differences with the beast. Here is a picture of what befell the Christian church. By getting herself into a position of political influence, totally contrary to the teaching of her Lord (for example, Jno. 18:36), she set off down a slippery slope which has led her to total moral corruption and the loss of any claim still to be the Bride of Christ. We see the wisdom of God’s requirement that His servants have nothing to do with the politics of the present age, and the danger to our spirituality of compromise.

From Revelation 17, too, we learn that there are both political and spiritual aspects to the harlot’s character. She is a “great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (v. 18), yet she is “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (v. 6). The same is true of the beast on which she now sits, having received (at an earlier point in his career) authority “over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (13:7), yet “[opening] his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name” (v. 6). We might find ourselves wishing that Scripture made a clear distinction in the respective roles of the harlot and the beast, such that one were purely political in character and the other religious; but it is not so, and plainly each protagonist has both political and religious aspects to them.

Recent events

Striking developments of late have reinforced the view that Revelation 17 is a prophecy of the ever-closer integration of the nations making up the European Union. While few of us, perhaps, feel that we fully understand the predicament that Europe is in, economically speaking, we have been left in no doubt of the gravity with which Europe’s leaders see the present situation, which has been openly spoken of as “Europe’s toughest hour since World War Two.”¹ In December, their response to the financial crisis was a summit at which it was agreed (with the one exception of

the United Kingdom) to implement significantly closer financial integration than has ever been seen thus far. The agreement is widely recognised as a “sea change” in the way the EU is run, involving a material sacrifice of the sovereignty of the member states. As a BBC News article put it, “they are all signing up to some potentially revolutionary changes, involving real loss of national sovereignty.”²

None of this is revelatory for the student of Bible prophecy, because Revelation speaks of just such developments, describing how the ten horns on the head of the beast “have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast” (17:13, NASB). Here is a picture of individual nations willingly giving up authority over their own affairs to a more powerful central body. This trend has been evident in Europe for years, and perhaps the only new aspect of it is the length to which integration is now being taken. This alone is a reminder to us of how close we are to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, since it is this coalition of beast and horns which “make war with the Lamb” (v. 14) when he comes again. Revelation 19 provides additional details of the conflict to take place, with “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse” (v. 19). The outcome is never in doubt. Christ’s enemies are “taken . . . [and] cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (v. 20). It is a picture of complete annihilation.

What is not described here, however, is the fate of the harlot. As far as Revelation 19 indicates, she is nowhere to be seen at the return of the Lord. She has in fact been dealt with back in chapter 17, and, curiously enough, her doom is brought about not by the Lord directly, but by the horns on the head of the beast she is riding: “the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (v. 16). This process is described in much greater detail in chapter 18.

Verse 16 has puzzled me for some time. How could it be that part of the very system over which the harlot presides, and with which she has so much in common politically and spiritually, is apparently responsible for her destruction—and all before the Master is here? Perhaps only in the

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15729860>

2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16111165>

unprecedented integration of European nations taking place under our noses are we now presented with a possible scenario which explains this verse.

The hardships already caused by financial policy within the eurozone are being borne—as ever in these situations—by the ordinary men and women of Europe. As the politicians stick stubbornly to the ideological principles which led to the creation of a single currency in the first place (having long since abandoned the pretence that the euro was introduced for monetary reasons, rather than political ones), the burden is being felt, not by the politicians themselves, but by the people on whose behalf they are meant to work. National economies are at best stagnant, if not actually teetering on the edge of renewed recession, and there is no sign at all of the growth required to help Europe out of its present woes.

Historically, it has been ongoing economic growth which has permitted governments to borrow to the levels they have (and which cannot now be repaid) but which has also funded the affluent, materialistic lifestyle of most people in the West. Now that the cash has run out, and people realise they are no longer likely to be able to enjoy the luxuries of life to which they have become used, they do not like it! The riots seen in Britain in 2011 were blamed largely on the increasing gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots.’ We have seen social unrest in Greece as a result of the austerity measures introduced to try and fix its economy.

Greece is only a very small part of the overall problem; so what level of unrest and lawlessness might we see if other, larger EU members go the same way, or if there is wholesale recession or depression across Europe? Yet rather than back-tracking on the policies which have caused such trouble for their own people, or finding a way for the more problematic members of the EU to leave—both of which would be to admit failure—Europe’s leaders have chosen to press on with faster and deeper integration.

The end of democracy?

A very interesting feature of Europe’s response to the financial crisis is the way in which democratically elected leaders have been replaced by unelected technocrats, brought in on the basis of their perceived ability to clean up the mess in the eurozone. Thus Greece and Italy are each now governed by a prime minister chosen not by popular vote but via the approval of the other

powers within the EU, notably Germany and France. Arguably, therefore, they are no longer democracies at all.

Here is a clear indication of what surrendering sovereignty means. No longer can struggling members of the Union be permitted to make their own decisions about their own economies; and no longer can they even select their own leaders. Instead a strong, central authority imposes its will—potentially to the detriment of, and certainly over the heads of, the populace of the countries concerned. In the words of Revelation 17 again, the horns “give the beast their power to rule” (v. 17, NIV).

Instinctively speaking, this feels like a disturbing development however we look at it. If the policy of greater financial integration fails to work (and, as everyone seems to agree, there is no guarantee of it doing so), what might the outcome be for the citizens of Europe? We already have a whole generation seemingly condemned to unemployment, dissatisfaction and apparent hopelessness. But what certainty is there that they will not be expected to put up with more of the policies which have resulted in such hardship for them—while their opportunity to have their own say via the ballot box is taken away?

The possibility presents itself that Revelation 17:16 is describing a pre-adventual ‘fleecing’ of the religious and economic system of Western Europe (the harlot), consisting of its rank-and-file population, by the political powers (the horns) that are already carrying her along unchecked—a scenario which would have been unimaginable until now. Scripturally, the symbol of a harlot is used to describe a group of people which has become unfaithful to God, often for short-term material gain (see, for instance, Ezekiel 16 and 23. Such we see, surely, in ‘Christian’ Europe, involving (though, as we have seen from Revelation 18, not limited to) the Roman Catholic Church and the entire capitalist system of the West.

But perhaps for us the most startling aspect of such a view of Revelation 17 is the timing of these events. For the period during which the ten horns derive the power which is given them is strictly limited by the terms of the prophecy: they “receive power . . . *one hour* with the beast” (v. 12). That this corresponds to the period during which the harlot is wasted can be seen from the triple repetition of the phrase in chapter 18: “Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come” (v. 10);

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought” (v. 17);

“Alas, alas, that great city . . . for in one hour is she made desolate” (v. 19).

Other than for phrases denoting time periods which are immeasurably small (such as Paul’s “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”—1 Cor. 15:52), one hour is very nearly the shortest time period mentioned in Scripture. Only the “half an hour” of Revelation 8:1 is shorter. However we might convert this “one hour” into a literal time period, therefore, the prophecy is shouting at us that the events of Revelation 17 will be of very short duration indeed from God’s point of view. Put simply, we really may not have much time left before the Lord Jesus is here.

Before the angel of chapter 18 has proceeded very far with his description of the fall of “Babylon the great” (v. 2), John hears a voice from heaven spelling out to Christ’s servants what the only reasonable response to God’s judgements is: “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (v. 4). The wording is lifted directly from Jeremiah 51, a chapter referring to the literal city of Babylon, which had been such a threat to the spirituality of God’s people in Old Testament times and which provides numerous word links with the New Testament Babylon of the book of Revelation. There is a reason why the Spirit does this. Put plainly, the political-religious-economic Western world of the twenty-first century is as big a threat to God’s people in the last days as King Nebuchadnezzar’s city was to Judah. A clear indication of what the king wished to do with the people of God is conveyed in Daniel 1:

any sign at all that they had been God’s people. Their true identity was to be whitewashed over, leaving no indication whatever of who they really were.

Running out of time

We make a grave mistake if we think that the Babylon of Revelation is any less ruthless in its attitude towards us. She too wishes to remove from us every indication that we are the people of God, and to appropriate us instead to her service. As Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to do with Daniel, so she too will stop at nothing to make us Babylonian in thought, speech, learning, lifestyle, appearance and worship. And given that she is “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev. 17:6), evidently she will take our very lives if that is necessary for her aims to be accomplished.

As we saw revealed to John, there is only one possible response: “Come out.” If we are indeed now in the final “one hour” during which the political powers of Europe prosecute the lunatic policies which lead to the very devastation of their own people, there is simply no time for delay. We must cleanse our lives not only of the religious doctrines of the ‘Christian’ world through which we journey as foreigners and pilgrims, but of *anything* which smacks of “Babylonian” influence—any aspect of our lifestyle or character which might lead to us being rejected at the judgement seat of Christ.

Time to act is running out. A glorious reward is in store for those who are willing to sacrifice the ideology, morality, materialism and luxury offered to us by Babylon, and to embrace instead

Daniel 1	Detail
v. 2	Taking the vessels that belonged to God’s temple and putting them to idolatrous use
v. 3	Taking the people who belonged to God
v. 4	Teaching them to think and speak like Babylonians
v. 5	Teaching them to live and learn like Babylonians
v. 7	Teaching them to look, sound and worship like Babylonians

Verse 7 is particularly instructive, as the personal names of Daniel and his three friends—each of them containing the name of the God of Israel—were all changed to Babylonian names incorporating the names of Babylonian idols. The point could hardly be clearer: King Nebuchadnezzar wished to remove from these new servants of his every trace of their true identity,

a life of self-sacrifice with the suffering people of God. Current events in Europe are the clearest possible indication to our generation of where we are in God’s timescale, as clear as was the regathering of the nation of Israel to their land in our parents’ generation. Whether our response matches theirs is for us to decide—but we do not have long to make up our minds.