

DISCOVERIES

By Mark Finley

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Solving the Riddle of Religious Confusion

The Book of Revelation reveals truth and exposes error. God doesn't want us to be deceived. He longs for us to be preserved and protected by His truth. In Revelation, the Apostle John tells the tale of two women. One is dressed in pure white, revealing the purity of true faith and doctrine. This pure woman of Revelation 12 is committed to Christ. She's absolutely loyal to Him. Her heart burns with a love for Jesus. Nothing can break her loyalty to the One she loves so much. This woman represents all the faithful believers who have loved Jesus Christ, kept His commandments and been obedient to Him down through the ages. Revelation 17 pictures another woman. Now we have the *opposite* picture. *Who is this woman in scarlet riding on a Beast?* The Bible gives many good clues—let's examine them briefly.

She's a CHURCH: In the Bible a WOMAN symbolizes a CHURCH. See such verses as **2 Corinthians 11:2, Isaiah 54:5-6, Jeremiah 3:14, Ephesians 5:31-33, etc.** Christ is represented as the Bridegroom (**Matthew 9:14-15, Revelation 19:7**). An unfaithful church commits spiritual adultery (**Ezekiel 16:28, 32**).

She's a CORRUPT church: Just as a pure woman represents a pure church, a corrupt woman represents a corrupt church. The *woman in white* is Christ's bride, the true church. But **Revelation 17:1, 15-16 & 19:2** call this second woman a "WHORE" or "HARLOT"—a *fallen* church teaching false doctrines.

She's a large, WORLDWIDE church: She sits on "many WATERS," explained as being many "*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*" **Revelation 17:1 and 15**. The very word *catholic* means "universal," and the Papal church has the largest, most widespread membership in Christendom.

She's a RICH church: This symbolic wicked woman—this corrupt church—is a rich one with gorgeous display. **Revelation 17:4** says she's "decked with GOLD and PRECIOUS STONES and PEARLS, having a GOLDEN cup in her hand." Which church would you say is the *richest* in the world?

She's a church built on SEVEN HILLS or MOUNTAINS: This identification, given in **Revelation 17:9**, is impressive and clear, for Rome is *proverbial* as "the city built on seven hills"! *Webster's* large unabridged dictionary says this under the entry "seven-hilled": "as, the SEVEN-HILLED CITY, that is, ROME, Italy." Furthermore, **Revelation 17:18** tells John, "The woman whom you saw is that GREAT CITY which reigns over the kings of the earth." John wrote this using the *present* tense for the word "reigns," and he knew as well as anyone else in his day that "that great city" was ROME.

She's a RELIGIOUS power dominating the CIVIL powers: **Revelation 17:3 & 7** tell us the harlot, or fallen church, is RIDING the beast. **Daniel 7:17 & 23** tell us a beast represent a king or kingdom. When we ride a horse, we direct it and control it, so the picture God gives here is of a *church* dominating the *civil* power. For centuries, the Papacy dictated to kings. When she wanted to punish or execute any who dared to question her teaching, she'd often call on *the police power of the state*. **Revelation 17:2** describes this harlot: "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication." She has influence over the kings of the earth, great influence over heads of state. Today, unlike other churches, the Vatican exchanges

ambassadors with every major nation on earth. They come to her city on seven mountains, and they bow before her, having “lived luxuriously with her.” **Revelation 18:9**.

She’s a church that revives BABYLON’S pagan teachings: “On her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT. . .” **Revelation 17:5**. Long before John wrote the Book of Revelation, the ancient city of Babylon had been completely destroyed and never rebuilt. For centuries it lay in ruins and had faded into insignificance. The apostle Peter could not have been referring to literal Babylon when he wrote in **1 Peter 5:13** that: “She who is in Babylon . . . greets you.” For there was no church or any other human institution in the desolate ruins of ancient Babylon. He was referring to ROME, as all authorities agree. It’s easy to see why early Christians used “Babylon” as a *code word* or *nickname* for Rome, for there are MANY STRIKING PARALLELS between the twin cities of literal Babylon of ancient times and figurative “Babylon” or Rome. Consider just a few: Babylon was the dominant warring power of its day—Rome was the dominant warring power of its own era. Babylon conquered Israel—centuries later, Rome also conquered Israel. Babylon destroyed the first Jerusalem Temple—Rome destroyed the second. Each carried sacred vessels from the Jewish Temple back to Babylon in the east and Rome in the west; each completely destroyed and devastated the city of Jerusalem; each carried away surviving Jews into captivity. Rome was Babylon all over again. As Babylon’s “carbon copy,” Rome provides a perfect example of *history repeating itself*! But more to the point, this woman who sits on seven hills—this church located in Rome—has revived the same pagan teachings that ancient Babylon taught ages ago. She baptizes them, sanctifies them, and brings them into the Christian church. Ages ago, when presumptuous men tried to build the Tower of Babel at Babylon, God confused their language. **Genesis 11:1-9**. So here in the last book of the Bible, “Babylon” is a spiritual term referring to *confusion*—not the confusion of languages in the Old Testament but RELIGIOUS CONFUSION as the church drifted away from God’s Word.

The Harlot & IMAGE Worship: Many false doctrines entered the church, but let’s focus on just three: IMAGE worship, IMMORTALITY of the soul, and SUN worship. First of all, Babylon was the center of idol worship. Everywhere you turned there were images—idols—representing the pagan gods, not just statues of Bel-Marduk, their chief god. King Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge golden idol and commanded all to bow down before it. But God’s Second Commandment in **Exodus 20:4-5** FORBIDS using images in religious worship, FORBIDS *bowing down before them*. Today the Papal church not only fosters those very things but also has DELETED God’s Second Commandment from its catechisms (official training manuals)!

The Harlot & NATURAL Immortality: Sincere Catholics often bow down before a statue of a SAINT and devoutly pray, even though the saint is DEAD. But the Roman church doesn’t teach that they’re dead—even though the idea that man’s soul is naturally immortal is a PAGAN one! All the ancient pagan religions—without exception—had the idea that the soul, or man’s essential being, was immortal. That non-biblical concept, inherited from Babylon, was a common thread running through them all. In Egypt, for instance, the pyramids were great monuments, great houses for the dead to hold their immortal spirits. But the heathen idea of man’s soul being naturally immortal comes from Egypt and Babylon and Greece, not the Bible, whose teaching directly contradicts it. See such verses as **1 Timothy 6:15-16, Ezekiel 18:4 & 20, Ecclesiastes 9:5, Psalm 6:5 and 115:17, John 11:11-14, Psalm 13:3, Ephesians 5:14, etc.**

The Harlot & SUN Worship: The main deity of Babylon and Egypt was the Sun god. Astrology and worship of the heavens originated in Babylon. But God calls it one of the *greatest* of “abominations” in **Ezekiel 8:15-16**! Roman Emperor Constantine was a sun worshiper who never gave it up. The Roman church disregards not only the SECOND Commandment about image worship but also the FOURTH Commandment about the Creator’s seventh-day Sabbath, substituting the unscriptural SUNDAY!

The Testimony of History . . .

- ◆ The book *Catholic Belief*, by Roman Catholic scholar Father Joseph Faà di Bruno, page 45, states this: “Like two sacred rivers flowing from Paradise, the Bible AND divine Tradition *contain the Word of God*, the precious gems of revealed truths. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of EQUAL sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition is to us MORE clear and safe.” Do you agree that tradition—the customs and practices of man—is more safe than the Bible? Rome baptizes *tradition* with the word “divine” and dares to hold it *above the Bible*.
- ◆ Henry Thomas Buckle, a world-famous historian, says in his book *The History of Civilization*, Volume 1, page 188: “*The adoration of idols* that is in Babylon was succeeded by *the adoration of saints*.”
- ◆ William E. Gladstone, four-time Prime Minister of Great Britain and a theologian in his own right, wrote in *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, pp. 195-198: “The doctrine of *natural*, as distinguished from Christian, immortality . . . crept into the Church, by a BACKDOOR. . . . When arguments are offered for the purely natural immortality of the soul, they are rarely, if ever, derived from Scripture. . . . The natural immortality of the soul is a doctrine wholly unknown to the Holy Scriptures, and standing on no higher plane than that of . . . PHILOSOPHICAL OPINION . . . of philosophical speculations DISGUISED as truths of Divine Revelation.”
- ◆ Sir James G. Frazer, an authoritative scholar, makes this statement in his book *The Worship of Nature*, Volume 1, page 529: “In ancient Babylonia the SUN was WORSHIPPED from immemorial antiquity.”
- ◆ Historian Arthur P. Stanley in his book, *The History of the Eastern Church*, page 184, says this about the Roman Emperor Constantine, “His coins bore on the one side the letters of the name of Christ; on the other, the figure of the SUN GOD, as if he could not bear to relinquish the patronage of the bright luminary.”
- ◆ Lewis Brown says this in *The Believing World*, page 112: “One cannot well refer to those cults of Babylon and Egypt and the rest as DEAD religions. For the *echo* of their ancient thunder is *still* to be heard reverberating in almost every form of faith existing today.” Ancient Babylonian image worship is in the church today. Ancient Babylonian sun worship is there. Ancient Babylonian belief in the immortality of the soul is there. Yes, the echo of that thunder is still heard in the church today!
- ◆ Doctor Alexander Hislop, in his classic work, *The Two Babylons*, page 105, says this: “To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals [that’s the Sabbath and Sunday] amalgamated, and . . . to get Paganism and Christianity—*now far sunk in idolatry*—in this as in so many other things, to shake hands.” He says further: “A glance at the main pillars of the Papal system will sufficiently prove that its doctrine and discipline in all essential respects have been derived from BABYLON.”
- ◆ Catholic William Gildea, Doctor of Divinity, wrote in *The Catholic World*, March, 1894, page 809: “The Sun was a *foremost* god with heathendom. . . . The sun has worshippers at this hour in Persia and other lands. . . . The PAGAN Sunday dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus.”
- ◆ Cardinal James Gibbons, archbishop of Baltimore and noted writer, said in *The Catholic Mirror*, December 23, 1893: “Reason and sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: *either* Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, *or* Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is IMPOSSIBLE.”

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#16 - Solving the Riddle of Religious Confusion

1. The Bible symbol of a woman always represents a CHURCH—as God says to His people: “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one _____ that I may present you as a chaste _____ to Christ.”

To check your answer, see 2 Corinthians 11:2, Isaiah 54:5-6, Jeremiah 3:14, etc.

2. T Since a pure woman = a pure church, and a corrupt woman = a corrupt church, we know
F that the woman in scarlet is a CORRUPT church, for John boldly calls her a *whore* or *harlot*.

To check your answer, see Revelation 17:1 and 19:2.

3. T Any encyclopedia, or even a good unabridged dictionary, will confirm that ROME is renowned
F as “the city built on seven hills” or “the seven-hilled city.”

To check your answer, see Revelation 17:9 and a good reference book.

4. The church John describes is a RICH one, for “the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with _____ and PRECIOUS STONES and _____, having a golden cup in her hand.”

To check your answer, see Revelation 17:4 & 18:16.

5. T Rome was “that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth” at the time John was
F writing the Book of Revelation.

To check your answer, see Revelation 17:18 and Luke 2:1.

6. T Besides sun worship, a second key feature of pagan religion in ancient Babylon and Egypt
F was the doctrine of the “immortal soul,” despite *Scripture’s consistent teaching* to the contrary.

To check your answer, see Ecclesiastes 9:5, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, Ezekiel 18:4 & 20, Psalm 6:5 and 115:17, etc.

7. The Bible warns us: “Babylon is _____, is _____,” and God—with inexpressible love—calls us to “Come _____ of her, _____ people, that ye be not partakers of her *sins*, and that ye receive not of her *plagues*.”

To check your answer, see Revelation 14:8 and 18:2-4.

A Thought for Today

Revelation 17:13, 14

These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 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.