

Where Is The Beast? (Part Four)

Symbols of Women

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In the three previous sermons on this subject, I think I have laid a foundation, showing that there are good reasons for exploring the possibility that some of what we were previously taught regarding the end-time is not 100% accurate. Things have happened both through the centuries and in the immediate past that need to be factored into our analysis of what is happening today.

I think there is no doubt that the general conditions that define the end-time are occurring, and I think that we indeed are *in the season*, as one might say. However, precise events are in some cases *not* falling into place as we thought that they would. Europe in particular is just not developing into the political, economic and military powerhouse that Revelation 13 describes, that everybody fears. This is not to say that it won't, but if it is to happen, it is happening very slowly.

In addition to the very slow development of Europe into a super powerhouse, we must also consider Israel's collective tremendous dominance in areas important to being recognized as the most influential people on earth today. I say these things because, even though we are in the season when end-time conditions exist, we still have only vague ideas about the precise amount of time left till all the prophesied end-time events come to pass. Therefore, speculation is a part of everybody's end-time scenario.

I Corinthians 13 is the "love chapter." I am only interested in the way that Paul opened this chapter, because I believe there is a principle of truth that is necessary to know.

I Corinthians 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing.

It's that first phrase—"And though I have the gift of prophesy." It is important to understand that whether or not we know every point of prophesy has little impact on salvation. Another way of putting this, is that there is *other* knowledge that is far more important to salvation than a true knowledge of prophesy. The things like coming to know God, growing and overcoming in conduct and attitude, are exceedingly more important.

As we entered the "end-time" season, God has revealed the end-time location of the people of Israel for our benefit, that we might have a better handle on what is going on. This is an end-time secret *revealed*, and therefore, He deemed it helpful for us to know, not for purposes of vanity, but that we might be better motivated to more precisely keep His law. And thus he said in Deuteronomy 29:

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed [In this case, we're talking about the location of the children of Israel in the end-time.] belong unto us and to our children forever, that [here is the purpose:] we may do all the words of this law.

Even mysteries of prophecy are revealed for the purpose of salvation so that we might be better motivated. Therefore, He deemed it helpful for us to know (again, not for purposes of vanity) but that we might be more precisely motivated to keep His law, as this verse clearly instructs. In other words, the revelation of prophetic truth is given that we might pay better attention to *conduct*. I think it is very important that we understand this principle.

Israel's geographical locations on earth are revealed, but *where* is Israel located in the book of Revelation? Can the book of Revelation—the most important prophetic book dealing with the end-time—ignore the most important powerful and influential collection of nations at the end-time? Israel is directly named in only three insignificant places in Revelation. As we began to see in the last sermon, it is clearly symbolically revealed in Revelation 12. I want you to turn there, because today we're going to begin to see it is just as clearly revealed in *other* places in Revelation, but I want to make a review of the Revelation 12 appearance. Israel, the nation, is symbolically referenced throughout this entire chapter.

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Israel is the woman clothed with the sun and moon and wearing the crown of stars. It is tying the symbol to Joseph's dream in Genesis 37 that does this. You look in all the Protestant commentaries, and they agree on this unanimously.

In verse 2, this same woman—Israel—is shown in travail of giving birth.

Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

In verses 3 and 4, the child that she is about to give birth to is the focus of the great red dragon's murderous intent. Verse 4 shows that clearly.

Revelation 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman [Israel] which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

In verse 5, the child she is about to give birth to is shown to be identified as the Messiah—Jesus Christ—the one born to rule all nations.

Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.

In verse 6, the woman—the same woman; Israel—fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her. I believe that the place prepared for her is where Israel is located today. In verses 10 and 11, the church is alluded to for the first time through the mention of people overcoming the great red dragon by the blood of the Lamb. It is important to note that by verse 7 it says:

Revelation 12:7-8 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not.

And then we find in verse 9 that the great red dragon was cast down. By the time we get to there, time, in the prophecy, had leapt forward to the *end-time*. We'll see this. The time that the red dragon is cast down did not happen anciently. That is an end-time event. So just that quickly, in the space of one or two verses, time moved almost, I guess you might say, from BC to AD—two thousand years.

This thing it says about "overcoming him by the blood of the Lamb" doesn't say who that is, and really doesn't become clear until verse 17. We will, on our way there, though.

Revelation 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

Whom does the great red dragon persecute? He persecutes Israel the nation—the one who gave birth to the Messiah! When he is cast down, he comes after Israel the nation.

Revelation 12:14 And to the woman [who gave birth to the man child] were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

It is Israel the nation that is fleeing. As far as this verse goes, it is Israel the nation (the woman that gave birth to the Messiah) that is fleeing, and not the church.

In verse 15 it is Israel the nation that has the flood cast out of the serpent's mouth at her. In verse 16, it is Israel the nation that is helped by the earth by swallowing up the flood.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman [Israel the nation], and went to make war with the *remnant* of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

It is not until verse 17 that the church *clearly* and directly comes into the picture by being identified as *Israel—the woman's remnant*. That's the way it's translated in the *King James*: "with the *remnant* of her seed." But as I told you in that last sermon, my Bible margin, says "*offspring*" instead of "remnant."

The *offspring* are identified in verse 17 as "those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [the Messiah]" who was born to the woman earlier in the chapter. Israel the nation doesn't keep the commandments of God, nor does it have the testimony of Jesus Christ; therefore, in the last half of verse 17, the subject has shifted from Israel the nation to the *Israel of God—the church*.

The Messiah, who was born of the woman, most definitely kept the commandments of God. The *remnant* that was born of the woman (identified as her *offspring*, just like the Messiah), is also clearly distinguished and separate from her, and they too keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Now putting verse 17 together with verses 7 through 12, shows that the church (the woman's offspring) is going to undergo some measure of persecution within Israel (the woman; the nation) before Israel the nation flees. That's very clear, because verses 7 through 11 come before verse 14, time wise. If this is not true, then tell me why does verse 11 say that "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and they loved not their lives unto death"? That indicates to me a pretty harsh persecution *within* Israel the nation.

The whole subject of chapter 12 is Israel the nation, except for those two mentions of *keeping the commandments*, *the blood of the Lamb*, and *having the testimony of Jesus Christ*, which appear in verse 11 and 17. So what do we learn from that chapter? We learn that through the great expanse of time—from the time that woman (the nation) flees, until verse 17 (which is an expanse of about two thousand years or so), Israel the church (the Israel of God) is *within* Israel the nation, wherever it is. This is not at all unusual.

Verse 17 then clearly implies that the dragon leaves the woman (the nation) who fled, and goes some place else in order to persecute those who keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Do you see what happened? A flip occurred between Israel the nation and the Israel of God (the church). Otherwise, why would it say that Satan leaves the woman that's he's persecuting and goes to persecute those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ and keep the commandments? By this time, in verse 17, they have separated away from one another. So they're in different locations at the time verse 17 takes place. Now if I can speculate, the church has gone to *its* place of safety that is different from where God caused the woman (the nation) to flee.

Let's go to Revelation 17. We're going to begin here an exploration of the characteristics of the woman in Revelation 17. We'll begin with verse 5. There might have been a dozen different places where I could have started, but I decided to start here because of one particular word.

Revelation 17:5-7 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore 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 ten horns.

It's interesting that God labeled this woman as a *mystery*. But He goes on to say, through the angel, "I will *show* you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast." Revelation 17 and 18 contain many clues as to her identification.

Now the word *mystery* is *Strong's* #3466. I have one of the latest editions of *Strong's*, and it is combined with *Vine's Expository Dictionary*. If you want to look this up, you're going to have to look up *Strong's* #3466 in *Vine's Expository Dictionary* under the word "mystery."

Strong's identifies this word "mystery" as: "Mystery is that which denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illuminated by His Spirit."

In other words, a mystery, in the biblical sense, in the Greek sense, is something that is unattainable by common human research, but rather is revealed by God so that His children, His people, can understand.

This word then parallels Daniel 12:10, which says that *at the end* "the wise shall understand." As I said a little bit earlier, here we are, in the end-time, and God has revealed where Israel is. Israel is a mystery to those in the world. They don't believe, even though they're told. They don't believe that the people of Northwest Europe, the United States, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand is where Israel is located. It just doesn't sink in. They can be presented with proof, not from the Bible, but from the world—from historical researches and such—and they *still* don't believe it. It's something that has to be revealed.

This revelation is not something that is just contained in words, but it is something that God gives to the heart and mind of His children so that they are desirous to believe it. And they do. It doesn't take a lot of brain power, but it takes instead a gift from God to believe, which His children will do.

We're concentrating on the woman at this point, and I want to jump to Revelation 18:7. We'll spend just a little bit of time here looking at characteristics of the woman. Notice the way God describes this woman.

Revelation 18:7 How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

In Revelation 18:7, I would have to say three of her remarkable spiritual characteristics are named, and we're going to look at this, because we will have an insight to what drives and motivates this woman, and will help to identify her because of what we understand here at the end-time.

First is that she glorifies herself. What this does is it implies pride, even to the point of arrogance. Jeremiah 51:41 is used in relation to ancient Babylon, but it applies to modern Babylon as God is using it here in Revelation 18. Jeremiah wrote:

Jeremiah 51:41 How is Sheshach [a biblical code name for Babylon] taken! And how is the *praise* of the whole earth [this is what I wanted you to think about] surprised! How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

He's talking about Babylon falling. At the time Jeremiah wrote this, they were so powerful as a nation, nobody wanted to deal with Babylon in an angry, accusative, attacking sort of way. He calls her "the *praise* of the nations." Do you know what this is saying there? It is saying "the *greatest* of the nations." Everybody praises Babylon as the greatest of the nations that are on earth. God is applying that to Babylon in Revelation 18. It is something that is implied; it is not directly stated. But even Babylon herself says "she has glorified herself."

And then it says "she has lived deliciously," or as some other translation suggests, using synonyms such as "luxuriously." "She has lived luxuriously, extravagantly, lustfully." "She has lived unrestrainedly." The woman (Babylon) is the very apex of luxury on earth. This phrase indicates satiety. Satiety means over-indulgence; super-abundance; the state of having too much.

Now thirdly in the verse, she says, to magnify these, "I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." "*Nobody's going to bother with me.*" "*I'll never know any sorrow.*" Taken together, what this last phrase means is that there is in her an avoidance of suffering, an unwillingness to sacrifice, and it indicates a rather "*in your face*" cocky superiority. What is interesting is that an avoidance of suffering, the unwillingness to sacrifice, inevitably produces compromise with law and conscience.

And so we have in this one verse a nation portrayed here as proud to the point of arrogance, self-confident in its security, thinking that it has produced

its power by its own means, and living extravagantly relative to the levels of the rest of the world, as it seeks immediate gratification while failing to discipline itself as to compromise with no standard.

There is something that I want you to note in Ezekiel 16 that is stated relative to Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 16:45 You are your mother's daughter; that loathes her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

That last phrase—"your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite"—tells you whom He's talking about here. Do you know where else he said that? He said it in verse 3 of the same chapter, directly after he says "Jerusalem."

Ezekiel 16:3 And say, Thus says the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem: Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan: your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite.

Now what we're about to read is said about the same city—Jerusalem. Notice this relationship that He makes.

Ezekiel 16:48 As I live, says the Lord GOD, **Sodom** your *sister* ...

In other words, Jerusalem shows the same characteristics as Sodom, like they're part of the same family.

Ezekiel 16:48-50 As I live, says the Lord GOD, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters. [You have outdone her.] Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness [That's virtually the same thing that Revelation 18:7 said.] was in her and in her daughters, neither did

she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

That's part of the characteristic of BABYLON THE GREAT, and it is paralleled directly with Jerusalem, which is the capital city of Israel.

Revelation 16:17-19 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings: and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

I read these verses first, as I go into the next section here, which is: "Is the woman of Revelation 17 a church?" We've seen some of her outstanding characteristics in Revelation 18:7, and now we are going to look at, "Is the woman a church?" I read these verses first because they are actually the introduction to Revelation 17 and Revelation 18, which teach the description of Babylon the Great.

I read these verses second, because they introduce the term "great." Now "great" has many applications. In relation to Babylon, it implies power, wealth, authority, and influence. It is the introduction to "Babylon the Great" in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:1-7 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and

scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore 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 ten horns.

The beast that is mentioned here is the same beast as is described in Revelation 13. Let's just flip back to Revelation 13 and refresh ourselves.

Revelation 13:1-4 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

What is added in Revelation 17:3 is that the woman is riding the beast. This is a position of control, much like the rider of a horse, and this woman is identified as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT." In order for her to be riding the beast there must be at least some relationship between the two, because after all, this beast is pretty wild. In fact, each—the woman and the beast—is part of the same general system—the Babylonish system. Remember, I said in an earlier sermon that Babylon became a worldwide system. It is the anti-God system, and the Greek word for this is the *cosmos*, meaning an orderly system that is against God. Both the woman and the beast are part of that same system, but they are obviously separate and different, but there is a relationship within the system.

Now God, I think, clearly reveals two distinctly different aspects, or applications, or approaches within the Babylonish system, and the woman and the beast represent these. The beast is depicted in Revelation 13:2 as consisting of the strongest part of a leopard, a bear, and a lion. Each of these beasts is unarguably wild, and each one, on its own, is a very powerful animal that a woman on her own would be no match for.

I think we can all agree that a human approach to life and its events would be approached differently by the woman and the beast; and yet we see in Revelation 17 that the woman, who would appear on the surface to be the weaker, is riding the beast—the seemingly super-powerful beast. She, at the point of time in which the prophecy is shown here, is superior, greater, more powerful and influential than the beast.

Mark 3:24-26 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.

Let's apply this principle to Revelation 17 where I stated to you that both the woman and the beast are different competing systems (nations—however you want to put it) within the overall Babylonish system. Babylon is a worldwide entity, a system all by itself, but the woman and the beast are competing systems (nations) within that great anti-God system. At the time of the prophecy, the woman is more powerful than the beast. She is riding it and she is controlling it.

The woman and the beast represent political power with somewhat diverse and competing application of the same Babylonish system. The competition, according to this principle that we just saw in Mark 3, will eventually escalate into war between them. Each is competing for world domination, and just as surely as Satan's house cannot stand, the Babylonish system cannot stand.

Revelation 17:16 And the ten horns which you saw 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.

We see where the competition is going to go between these two. At the beginning of Revelation 17, the woman is sitting on the beast, but by the end, the woman has been gobbled up by the super-powerful beast. It does not happen until God puts it into the heart of the kings, who make up the beast, to do so. We can begin to see, that up until that point, God is intervening on the behalf of the woman who would seem to be weaker than this wild beast, but she's actually controlling it much of the time.

Competition may appear on the surface to be good, producing better quality and better value, but it ultimately destroys. That is God's point. It ultimately destroys.

We have, it seems, always accepted that the woman is the Catholic church. This is done largely on the basis of the symbolism that a woman symbolizes a church. However, I think that there is very good reason to believe that this conclusion is wrong, because as I mentioned earlier in another sermon, that symbolism is not consistently followed in the Bible itself. We're going to look at some examples in the Old Testament showing that a woman symbolizes a city, and the city in turn represents the nation that it is within.

Let's read Ezekiel 16:2 so that we can see the subject of this chapter.

Ezekiel 16:2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations. [There is the subject.]

Ezekiel 16:7 And I have caused you [Jerusalem] to multiply as the bud of the field, and you have increased and waxen great, and you are come to excellent ornaments: your breasts are fashioned, and your hair is grown, whereas you were naked and bare.

Is there any doubt that He is talking about Jerusalem in female terms?

Ezekiel 16:15 But you did trust in your own beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on every one that passed by: his it was.

We have advanced from Jerusalem, to a woman who has grown. Her breasts are formed, and in verse 15 now she is out committing adultery with others.

Ezekiel 16:20 Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters, whom you have borne unto me [that's what a woman does], and these have you sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of your whoredoms a small matter?

Ezekiel 16:32 But as a wife [Jerusalem was God's wife] that commits adultery, which takes strangers instead of her husband.

Brethren, it is very clear that God uses a woman to symbolize a city and a nation. In this case it is specifically Jerusalem and Israel.

Ezekiel 23:1-4 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the breasts of their virginity. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names: Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.

That is very clear. Ahola symbolizes Samaria, which in turn represents Israel—the northern ten tribes. Aholibah symbolizes Jerusalem, which in turn represents Judah—the southern two tribes.

It also becomes clear from these two chapters that the symbolism (*woman—city, nation*) also symbolizes women of vile character and reputation, even though at times the symbol *might* represent the church that the blood of Jesus Christ has made clean.

Think about this symbolism as we go through Lamentations 1:1-7. Notice the pronouns.

Lamentations 1:1-7 How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow [female]! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weeps sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she has none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwells among the heathen, she finds no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her Sabbaths.

Now let's review those seven verses. The symbol begins as a city. The city is obviously Jerusalem, and the city is portrayed as a widow (woman). And then Jerusalem is depicted as a princess whose friends have deceived her. Her lovers have rejected her, and she has become a slave; but the symbol that represents the city is still female. It's gone from widow to princess.

In verse 3, Jerusalem next morphs into Judah the nation. Judah is clearly twice referenced as "she" in the middle of the verse. Jerusalem and Judah are then referenced as "Zion," and in verses 4, 5, and 6 is again referred to as "her." In verse 6, Jerusalem becomes the (female) *daughter* of Zion, whose beauty has faded and is counterpoised with (male) princes who are of no help to her. In verse 7 we return full circle to Jerusalem, and again it is referenced as "**her**" five times, and as "**she**" once. Clearly a woman symbolizes a city, and the city its nation.

Each one of these female symbols is depicting the same thing—Jerusalem and Judah—but from slightly different perspectives. But within the context, it is *not* depicting a church. Now is there any parallel with the church here in Lamentations? Yes, but it is indirect, and at best vague, and secondary. Israel is *never* referred to as a church in the Old Testament. Why? Because there was no church. It is not until the New Testament that the Bible suggests that a woman symbolizes a church, and that symbol is restricted to the Israel of God. That's important in reference to Revelation 17. Thus when you understand Revelation 17, Babylon (the great woman, the harlot) cannot be the church under *any* circumstance.

The conclusion that the church is symbolized by a woman is put together by combining Galatians 4 with Revelation 12. But even in doing that, the New Testament church *still* suggests a city and a nation. Do you want proof? Turn with me to Galatians 4:26 where Paul uses this allegory, and he says:

Galatians 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

There we have a female symbol (mother), but what is right in the verse? Jerusalem. Jerusalem above is our mother.

I want you to go now to I Peter 2:9. Peter is obviously talking about the church, and he said:

I Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *holy nation* .

So obviously in the New Testament the church can be symbolized by a woman, but don't ever forget that that symbol carries with it a city (Jerusalem above) and a nation (which is the Kingdom of God). So even in the New Testament, a woman symbolizes a city and a nation.

Acts 7:38 This is he [Moses] that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.

Our English word "church" is derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, which means "belonging to a lord." But of itself, *kuriakon* has absolutely **no** religious connotation. It simply meant "the lord or master of a property." See, it "belonged to the lord," and is never used in the Bible in reference to the body of Jesus Christ (the church). It is used in Revelation 1:10, and I want you to turn there to see *kuriakon* used in that place.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.

Kuriakon is used where it says "on the Lord's [*kuriakon*] day." It doesn't mean Sunday. It doesn't mean the Sabbath. It means the Day of the Lord, which is at the end-time. So it's a day belonging to the Lord. Now how did this get into the English language? It was the English-speaking Israelites who transformed *kuriakon* into a religious term. It emerged first in the word "kirk," and finally evolved through the centuries into the word "church." Its first usage in English was as a building in which religious meetings were held, but eventually became used for the people in the building too. *Kuriakon* is not used in Acts 7:38. *Ecclesia* is, which means "assembly, group" and it is even used in the Bible for a mob.

Ancient Israel in the wilderness, and even in its own land, was not a church. The church (*ecclesia*)—the *Israel of God*—did not come into being until that Pentecost when God created those great signs to announce its birth. Israel in the wilderness was an assembly, or a congregation, or a mob, or a group. It was not a church as the English language would understand.

We're going to look at another Old Testament example of a woman symbolizing a city, and we're going to get it from Isaiah 47:1.

Isaiah 47:1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for you shall no more be called tender and delicate.

Again we have a woman symbolizing a city-nation, not a church, but symbolizing in this case Babylon (a pagan city and a nation), not Israel.

Herbert Armstrong taught us that we have to look very carefully at the context in which things appear. As he said, the book of Revelation largely supplies its symbols and interprets them as well.

Revelation 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore 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 ten horns.

Revelation 17:18 And the woman which you saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

The chapter itself directly identifies the woman, by the biblical symbol, as a great city, and not a church.

There is more on this subject that will come later that will touch on that, but I want to go back to Revelation 17:5, and we'll touch on something else that has to do with symbolism, and it is reasonably important.

Revelation 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Now what about this statement that this woman is the mother of harlots? In the past we have referred to her harlot children as being the Protestant churches that revolted from the Catholic church; however, there is a weakness in this concept found in the Bible's use of the terms *daughter*, *son*, *harlot* and other terms which I will give you.

Let's go back again into the Old Testament to the book of Hosea. I think you understand that God had Hosea physically act out what had happened to God in God's relationship with Israel.

Hosea 1:2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.

Just make a note of that word "*children*". We have mother and her offspring—her children.

Hosea 2:2-4 Plead with your mother.

Now who would be the mother of Hosea and all the people of Jerusalem, we'll say? Well, it would be Jerusalem, or we might say, in a larger context, Israel.

Hosea 2:2-4 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife.

That makes it very clear. He's talking about all of Israel. God didn't just marry Jerusalem. He married all of Israel. Now does Israel only consist of men or women? No. It's both. We're beginning to see that the term "wife" can include both male and female, depending on the context in which it appears. And so does the word "children" indicate both male and female. That one is easy to see.

We're going to see as we go through here that the word "daughter" also includes men, and the word "son" also includes women, and the word "harlot" means both men and women. It doesn't mean just women, because Israel was made up of men and women. Children are made up of men and women. The Bible uses those terms interchangeably, and one almost always includes the other. I mean one gender also includes the other gender as well.

Hosea 2:2-4 Please with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, ...[Remember Ezekiel 16]...and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children: [Are her children both men and woman, boys and girls, male and female?] for they be the children of whoredoms.

Hosea 4:11-13 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declares

unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms has caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

Were women the only ones who committed whoredom? No. The men committed whoredom too. And spouses? Was it only women who were committing whoredom? No. There is another term. "Spouses" includes men *and* women as well who were sinning.

This one will clinch it for you:

Hosea 7:4 They are *all* adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker who ceases from raising after he has kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

Male and female. They were *all* adulterers.

Ezekiel 16:44-48 Behold, every one that uses proverbs shall use this proverb against you, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter. You are your mother's daughter that loathes her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And your elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at your left hand: and your younger sister that dwells at your right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet have you not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, you were corrupted more than they in all your ways. As I live, says the Lord GOD, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters.

Daughters includes everybody within the city.

Ezekiel 16:53-55 When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of your captives in the midst of them: That you may bear your own shame, and may be confounded in all that you have done, in that you are a comfort unto them. When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then you and your daughters shall return to your former estate.

When the Jews came back to their former estate in Jerusalem, was it only women who came back? Do you see the way "daughters" is being used? It is being used in a collective sense.

There is another one in Lamentations 3:

Lamentations 3:51 My eye affects my heart because of all the daughters of my city.

It's pretty clear there that all of Jerusalem's inhabitants, male and female, are referred to as *daughters*.

Now why is this true? Listen to this quote from *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, page 194, to what it says about "*daughters*," or "*daughters of*":

"The Hebrew idiom reflects a double metaphor common in the culture of the ancient Near East. A capitol city was personified as a woman, and the inhabitants of that city collectively as her daughter."

"Jerusalem remains distinct as she whose Husband is the One God, Yahweh."

"Thus her daughters [Jerusalem's daughters], the collective inhabitants, depended on her for identity, but also shaped her future by their action."

Thus the terms *sons, daughters, children, harlot*, as well as other descriptive terms like *seed, adulterers, liars* are used collectively without regard to specific gender when the sense of the term is "those showing the characteristics of." That's what a child does. A child shows the characteristics of its parents regardless if it's a man or woman, male or female. And so the inhabitants of Jerusalem showed the characteristics of Jerusalem. That is why Hosea is told to write, "they are all adulterers." Male, female, whatever.

Thus in Revelation 17, the city is Babylon (symbolically a woman), and is said to be the mother of harlots, which is used in the same way as "daughters"—that is, collectively, including the male gender; thus **ALL** of her offspring—male and female—are to be considered as harlots. It is not something limited to church denomination.

We will stop here, and God-willing, in the next sermon I will continue to give you characteristics of the woman of Revelation 17 and Revelation 18. There is a great deal more to come.