

The Seduction of the Prostitute and the Beast

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Date: 05 May 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. It's great to worship with you. If you don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and it is my joy and privilege to preach God's Word to you this morning. If you have your Bibles, please open it to Revelation. It's the last book in the Bible. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy that you can have and use while you're here and take home with you. Revelation chapter 17.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Father, we humble ourselves again and incline our ears and our hearts to you so that you might address us, speak to us from your Word, so that our perspectives that are so pervasively and thoroughly enculturated in this sinful world might be renewed and transformed and aligned with your purposes and priorities.

So to that end, God, minister to us by the power of your Holy Spirit in the reading and preaching of your Word for the glory of your name and fill your people this morning with the hope of the gospel.

in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand and join me as I read Revelation 17.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bulls came and said to me, Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

[1 : 5 7] And he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

And on her forehead was written a name of mystery, Babylon the Great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

When I saw her, I marveled greatly. But the angel said to me, Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast because it was and is not and is to come.

[3 : 1 7] This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen.

One is, the other has not yet come. It is an eighth, but it belongs to the seven and it goes to destruction. And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour together with the beast.

These are of one mind and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the lamb and the lamb will conquer them.

For he is Lord of lords and king of kings. And those with him are called and chosen and faithful. And the angel said to me, the waters that you saw where the prostitute is seated are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.

And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

[4 : 40] And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. I came across a fascinating list that WalletHub, a finance company, put together entitled The Most Sinful Cities in America.

It ranked 182 major cities in the U.S. based on how sinful it is according to their estimation. And they used 37 different metrics with corresponding weights to determine how sinful the city is across seven different categories of sin, broad categories of sin.

So the first category was anger and hatred. So they used rates of violent crimes and assaults to assess the city's level of sinfulness in that category, among other metrics. Secondly, the rate of fraud and theft was used to assess its level of jealousy.

The instances of driving under the influence and drug use was used to assess its excesses. The number of casinos per capita and to assess its greed. And the number of adult entertainment establishments per capita and Google search interest index for porn to assess its lust.

And then the number of tanning salons per capita and Google search interest index for plastic surgeries to assess its vanity. And the average time spent watching TV, among other factors, to assess its laziness.

[6 : 11] And this is no definitive list. It's not the Bible, obviously. But still fascinating. And unsurprisingly, at the top of the list is, you might guess, Las Vegas, which has been nicknamed Sin City since the early 1900s.

Houston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Atlanta round out the top five. Boston is ranked 95th. But we break the top 50 in the greed category, which is not surprising.

A city is where there's a high density of people. And for that reason, there is a concentration and synergy of human creativity and wealth and intellect.

However, that also means that there is, in cities, a concentration of human sin and pride. And that's also one of the reasons why we are here as a church in the city.

Because those who are well have no need of a physician. But those who are sick. And Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Ever since the tower and the city of Babel in the land of Shinar in Genesis 11, when people said to themselves, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.

[7 : 30] And let us make a name for ourselves. It was the first city. Cities have since then been a monument to human hubris. Don't people move into cities nowadays for the exact same reason?

Let us make a name for ourselves. Let us build a city to reach to the top of the heavens. Living life apart from God. Living life without reference to God.

That, at its heart, is what sin is all about. Seeking to make a name for ourselves rather than praising the name of God. And wanting to reach the heavens so that we can, in a sense, be gods ourselves.

That sinful human hubris is succinctly captured in the final stanza of William Ernest Henley's defiant poem, *Invictus*. Which goes like this. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll.

I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. He's making two biblical allusions here that you may be catching on to already.

[8 : 42] The straight gate, S-T-R-A-I-T. He's referring to the narrow gate that Jesus speaks of when he commends us in Matthew 7, 13. Enter by the narrow gate, or the straight gate.

For the gate is wide, and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow, and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. That's the first illusion.

The second one, when he talks about the scroll that is charged with punishments, he's speaking of the scroll with the judgment seals in Revelation 5. So then the poet is saying here, I don't care how narrow the gate is, or how hard it is to get to heaven.

I don't care what kind of standards of obedience I have to, I'm required to follow. I don't care what kind of fearful punishments await me in the scroll of God's judgments. I'm going to do what I want to do, and I'm going to go where I want to, where I please to go, because I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul. It's such a bare-faced declaration of human rebellion that it's shocking, but that's what's at the heart of sin, and that's what the heart of the city of man.

[9 : 59] From the ancient city of Babel to Babylon, from the ancient city of Rome to modern-day metropolises, cities have been incubators and stewards of human culture, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

And therefore, cities have been a monument to human hubris. This is what Babylon, the great prostitute, represents, the center of the sinful world's cultural and economic power.

Revelation portrays three main enemies of God's people as the beast, the false prophet, and the great prostitute, and they're all under the authority of Satan, the ancient dragon.

And they use different tools to attack and oppress God's people. The beast's primary tool of offense against the people of God is persecution. Oppressing the people of God.

And the false prophet, the second beast's main tool, the primary tool, is deception. False religion. He gets people to worship the beast. But the third, the great prostitute, her primary tool is perhaps the most insidious and subtle of all.

[11 : 13] That's seduction. Revelation 17 to 18 both deal with the fall of Babylon, the great prostitute. And the main point of chapter 17 is that as the bride of the lamb, we must resist the seductive power of the prostitute and the beast.

First exhortation, verses 1 to 8, is do not marvel at their debauchery and dominion. And the second exhortation, verses 9 to 18, is keep in mind their destruction and desolation.

And the third and final exhortation in verse 14, is be faithful to the lamb who chose you. In order to resist the seductive power of the prostitute, we must take care not to marvel at her debauchery and dominion in this world.

An angel invites John to come and see the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, in verses 1 and 2, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

We are told in verse 5 that the name of this great prostitute is Babylon the Great, mother of prostitutes and earth's abominations. And so the downfall of Babylon was already proclaimed early in chapter 14, and the seventh bull that Charlie preached on last week from chapter 16 also talked about the fall of Babylon.

[12 : 35] And in chapter 17 to 18, we see in great detail how it actually happens. She is called Babylon the Great, and the great prostitute, much like the great red dragon that she serves from chapter 12, to indicate the enormous scale and power and influence that she wields.

Verse 18 calls her the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth. Ancient Babylon was the biggest city in the world in its heyday, and because the Babylonian empire sacked Jerusalem and carried Judah into captivity and exile, and because King Nebuchadnezzar tried to assimilate the Jews, their culture and their religion into Babylonian culture and religion, and lead them to apostasy, the name Babylon became synonymous in biblical literature with worldly powers and influences that persecute God's people and seduce them into compromise.

That's what Babylon represents. In the first century AD, when Revelation was written, the main Babylon would have been Rome, because in the same way that Babylonian empire destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 586 BC, so the Roman empire destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 70 AD.

Later in verse 9, we're told that the seven heads of the beast are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. Rome was popularly called a city on seven hills, city of seven hills.

In the ancient world, you can see actually a coin that was produced in 71 AD under Emperor Vespasian's reign, which depicts on the left, I think I have a picture of this to show, Gary.

[14 : 21] It shows the picture of goddess Roma, who is a personification of the city of Rome, and she is sitting on seven mountains or seven hills. And to the right of her, you see the water, the river Tiber.

And Babylon, the great prostitute, cannot be understood, however, as only referring to Rome. Even though it does refer to Rome, it's not referring only to Rome. And John makes that clear here in Revelation 17 to 18, because Rome already fell.

It was already sacked many hundreds of years ago. But this Babylon will finally fall only at the end of the age. So she is called Babylon here, not Rome, because Babylon is the type and the pattern that represents all cities that are at the center of the sinful world's cultural influence and economic power.

So what modern sociologists call today global cities, or world cities, or alpha cities, I didn't even know these terms existed until this week, such as New York and London, which function as hubs of the global economy and international politics, as well as cultural centers featuring world-renowned theater, museums, and landmarks, can also be appropriately called Babylon.

Verse 1 says that this great prostitute is seated on many waters. This is an expression that is taken from Jeremiah 51.13, which prophesies of the fall of Babylon, who dwells by many waters, rich in treasures.

[15 : 52] The idea of dwelling by many waters is connected to the fact that she is rich in treasures because of the bodies of water that enrich the cities by making them centers of trade and commerce.

Ancient Babylon was famously built upon the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the rivers, thrived as the economic center of the ancient world. That's why that whole geographic region is called Mesopotamia, which means between two rivers, between the rivers.

Similarly, ancient Rome, seated on the Tiber River, and by the Tyrrhenian Sea, was the commercial center of the world. An angel later explains in verse 15, the waters that you saw where the prostitute is seated are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.

Both Babylon and Rome teamed with multitudes and nations and peoples from all cultures going in and out of them all the time.

And this is an apt picture of the great prostitute seated on many waters and her whoredom, her sexual immorality. Proverbs 5, 15, 16 counsels young men to flee from the adulteress and to be faithful to his wife with these words.

[17 : 09] Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you.

But Babylon and Rome and all major metropolitan centers of cultural and economic power, they drink, not from one source of water, but from many waters.

And they share their streams of water with strangers, scattering their springs abroad. So verse 2 says, with her, the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality and with the wine of her sexual immorality, the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

And if you've been with us through our series in the book of Revelation, you know that the phrase dwellers on earth is John's characteristic way of referring to the unrepentant, people who in this world, unbelievers, who are unrepentant of their sins and continue to rebel against God.

And these people are drunk on the wine of Babylon's sexual immorality, which we find out in verse 6 is the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

[18 : 25] Babylon's prosperity and intoxication come at the expense of the lifeblood of the people of God because her cultural and economic prowess lead to the oppression and marginalization of God's people who do not participate in their idolatrous agenda.

And this prostitute is fertile. Verse 5 says that she is a mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations. She produces offspring that are also prostitutes and our abominations fill the earth with even more abominations.

And this is figurative language because obviously people don't commit sexual immorality with cities. They do so all the time in cities, but they don't do it with cities.

So this is a metaphor for partaking in and coming under the influence of Babylon's worldliness and sinful idolatry. Because sexual immorality is such a shocking betrayal of true love within marriage, the Bible often uses it as a metaphor for spiritual idolatry.

In what ways have the self-sufficient arrogance, the self-absorbed vanity, the liberal sensuality, and the boundless greed and ambition of the city of man rubbed off on you?

[19 : 48] Maybe you're not committing blatant adultery and spiritual idolatry against God. But imagine a married woman who is infatuated with a man who is not her husband.

She hasn't had sex with him, but they're in each other's DMs sending flirty texts and emojis. She fantasizes about him and her mind and heart are more occupied with him than with her own husband.

When she is talking to him in person, she gets, her eyes get all, you know, oogly-googly and she giggles in a way that she never does when she's with her husband.

Yes, she hasn't slept with him, at least not yet, but would you call that faithful? Faithful? Even if there isn't physical adultery, there is certainly emotional adultery, adultery of the heart.

And in what ways are we trying to do exactly that with Babylon, the city of man? Babylon exerts its sinful influence upon people of God even today.

- [21 : 05] Are you consumed with zeal for the glory of God? Or are you consumed with lust for the glory of man? Do you live with an eternal, heavenly perspective?
- Or do you live with a temporal, earthly perspective? Are the purposes and priorities of your life governed by and grounded in God's word in the scriptures? Or have you adopted the world's agenda of health and wealth and sex and success at all costs?
- Are your relational impulses driven by the principles of scripture? How you treat people? Or is it determined more by Taylor Swift lyrics than TikTok videos?
- Is your perception of beauty shaped by the virtues described in scripture? Or is your view of beauty motivated or shaped by the style trends on Instagram?
- Are you motivated and constrained by the love of God? Or do you live primarily for the love and approval of man? When John actually sees Babylon the great prostitute in his vision in verse 3 he sees that she is sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names and it has 7 heads and 10 horns.
- [22 : 31] This description is a tip off that we've seen this beast before. In Revelation 13.1 we saw a beast with 10 horns and 7 heads with 10 diatems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.
- And when I preached on chapter 13 I explained to you that this beast is a hybrid beast. It's a combination of the four beasts that are prophesied of in Daniel 7 that represent the Babylonian Empire the Medo-Persian Empire the Macedonian Empire and finally the Roman Empire.
- So then this beast is not primarily a representation of a single antichrist as much as it is a composite symbol and a corporate representative of all antichrists of the worldly kings and kingdoms that oppose God and persecute his people.
- The beast in short represents political power and Babylon in short represents cultural and economic power. And there is an unholy alliance between the two.
- We are told in verse 7 that this beast carries Babylon around meaning this beast's political authority serves as a pedestal for Babylon's cultural and economic prominence.
- [23 : 39] the political powers of this world ensure the ascendancy and dominance of sin and worldliness in our culture. Remember the beast's policy in chapter 13 verse 17 no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark of the beast that is the name of the beast or the number of its name.
- Unless you pledge allegiance to the beast and commit idolatry you cannot buy and sell and prosper. So then people who would grow rich people who would grow rich must prostitute themselves with Babylon and they also must prostrate themselves at the feet of the beast and worship him.
- And there's something about this dominion that the beast and the prophet have over the world that's alluring. I will elaborate on this a little further later but the beast and the prostitute both imitate Christ and his church respectively.
- Three times we are told here that this beast was and is not and is to come. This is a crude imitation of God and Christ.
- God is repeatedly described in the book of Revelation as the eternal one chapter 1 verse 4 chapter 1 verse 8 chapter 4 verse 8 as the one who was and is and is to come.
- [24 : 56] Moreover we are assured repeatedly all throughout Revelation that Jesus is the one who is coming soon. So then this beast is imitating that. It says in verse 8 that the world will marvel to see the beast because it was and is not and is to come.
- This is alluding back to chapter 13 verse 3 which talked about how the beast was one of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound. It died basically but it was raised to life again.

It was healed and the whole world marveled at it and followed it. Notice the word marvel is used there as well as here. in parallel. So one of its heads the beast's heads one of the kings that seemingly dies and is raised to life again is making a mockery of Jesus a parody of Jesus who was described in chapter 5 as having been inflicted with a mortal wound and yet standing risen.

Irish poet Oscar Wilde popularized the proverb imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness. Another proverb says hypocrisy is an homage that vice pays to virtue.

This is what's going on here. The dragon and the beast cannot fix their mediocrity so they imitate God and Christ in their greatness. The beast can only produce cheap knockoffs of the real thing.

[26 : 18] so everything about him his kingdom and his glory his name it's all bootleg bogus and this beast derives its plausibility its credibility by imitating the true king Jesus.

But this imitation is alluring. Verse 8 says that the world will marvel to see the beast. Similarly verse 6 says that when John saw the great prostitute he marveled greatly.

John is obviously not worshipping Babylon in the same way that the earth dwellers are following after her and marveling at the beast because he knows exactly what she is.

The angel tells him exactly what this woman is. John can see the name the profanities the blasphemous name on her head but when he still sees this woman this Babylon all rayed in purple and scarlet a beautiful seductive nightgown adorned with gold and jewels and pearls holding in her hand a golden cup and he sees her sitting on this powerful beast writing John marvels greatly prompting the angel's implicit rebuke in verse 7 why do you marvel?

Don't be amazed by her don't be dismayed by her I will explain to you her full identity and faith. There's something about the rule and authority of the beast and the Babylon the prostitute something about the beast's rule and authority and power resembles God's rule and authority and power something about the beauty and the diversity of Babylon resembles the beauty and diversity of the people of God the church of Christ there's something about the productivity and prosperity of Babylon that resembles our heavenly inheritance and labor for the Lord in the kingdom of God but don't marvel at the great prostitute what makes you marvel at the city of man is it its cosmopolitanism with its various languages and cuisines the world is your oyster does it make you feel cultured not boxed in by the narrow bigotry and prejudice that you attribute to your parents or the small town that you grew up in or is it the city's prosperity cities generate so much wealth people living in urban areas earn significantly more and have higher living standards than people in rural areas or is it the city's intellectualism are you drawn to the air of sophistication and academic rigor that permeate our city or is it the many sensual pleasures and delights that the city of man promises

[29 : 21] Babylon the city of man is only a crude imitation of the new Jerusalem the city of God so do not marvel at the debauchery and dominion of the prostitute also keep in mind the eventual destruction and desolation of the beast in Babylon I've said to you before that the description of the beast as the one who was and is not and is about to rise is John's creative use of the Nero legends that were popular during his day Nero Caesar was the emperor of Rome from 54 to 68 AD but when he was eventually deposed by the Roman senate he killed himself but because his death was shrouded in mystery and there weren't many witnesses there were really no witnesses many people refused to accept the rumor of his death and believed that Nero had taken refuge among the Parthians who lived in the north and that he would return that Nero would return to exact vengeance on those who had deposed him in order to retake the kingdom so this was a myth that was very popular called Nero returned or Nero living again two related myths and this myth was so widely believed that historically there were three

Nero imposters emerged in the coming years after Nero's death all trying to lead a rebellion trying to claim to be this return of Nero and John is making creative use of this Nero legend because he's using Nero as the type or the pattern of the antichrist because of Nero's notorious persecution of Christians second century Christian author Tertullian calls Nero the first that persecuted the Christian doctrine third century Lactantius also wrote that Nero was the first that persecuted the servants of God so he's the first great persecutor of the church and in that sense becomes the prototype and the archetype of all those who would come as antichrist to persecute God's people and that's why Tertullian later calls Emperor Domitian who also persecuted Christians the second Nero in this way this beast who has been healed of his mortal wound appears in the repeated rise and fall of states and kingdoms that oppose God and oppress his people in scripture first it was Egypt and then Babylon then Persia then Macedonia and then Rome and so on right down to our modern age but I think at the end of the end times there will also be a singular antichrist who will conquer the people of God like never before that's why verse 8 says that the beast that was and is not and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction it talks about how he is not during John's time this beast is not but he's about to rise from the bottomless pit this final beast is a part of this beast in chapter 13 but according to verse 11 it is an eighth head that comes at the end of the end though it belongs to the seven it is an eighth head and it goes to destruction people have tried to decipher verse 10 the meaning of it in so many different ways seven kings five of whom have fallen one is the other is not yet to come and when he does come he must remain only a little while people have tried to pin these exact exact words on individuals historical figures but there has been no consensus because I don't think

John intended for us to pin these people on exact historical figures there are seven kings because as John does all throughout the book seven is the number for completeness and the seven kings represent all of the worldly rulers that persecute God's people during the church age and this eighth one is the final one the end of the end the ultimate antichrist who will reign with the ten horns in verse 12 who are called the ten kings who have not yet received royal power and they are to receive authority as kings for one hour together with the beast but these ten kings will eventually hand over their power and authority to the beast and together they will make war on the lamb it says in verse 14 notice just how many times this passage reminds us of the final destruction of the beast and the prostitute it's ironic that the beast was and is not and is about to rise from the bottomless pit but for what what does what purpose and to what end does he rise from the bottomless pit verse 8 tells us the beast was and is not and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction that's the destiny of the beast when this eighth king finally comes what will happen to him verse 11 tells us it goes to destruction again these ten kings will reign with the final antichrist and hand over their authority to the beast how long will their reign last verse 12 tells us only for one hour indicating a short defined limited period of time this is in stark contrast to our lord Jesus the lamb of God who is the lord of the lords and king of kings unlike the beast and these kings who come rise only in order to go to destruction the resurrected Jesus says in verse chapter 1 verses 17 and 18 fear not I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades Jesus died for our sins on the cross and he was raised from the dead so that death no longer has dominion over him unlike this beast who will come and only go to destruction likewise with Babylon it says in verse 16 the ten horns and the beast will hate the prostitute they will make her desolate and naked and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire that's the sad fate of all prostitutes eventually they're discarded when they're no longer useful for the pleasures of the man that they serve at the end of the end the great prostitute unholy alliance with the beast will fall apart and the great prostitute will be abandoned left desolate and naked by the very kings that ravaged her for their pleasure the three descriptions of Babylon's ultimate fate fit the metaphors that are in this chapter like a discarded prostitute she will be desolate and naked like an animal that is preyed upon she will be devoured her flesh will be devoured by the beast and like a city that is conquered she will be burned up with fire the political side of the world's anti-God system will turn against the center of the world's cultural and economic influence and they will together become undone because as Jesus said in Mark 3:26 if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided he cannot stand he cannot stand but is coming to an end that's how the beast and the prostitute and Satan the great dragon will all come to an end the sovereignty and providence of God in all of this should give us much comfort notice in verse 17 the reason why the beast and the ten kings turn against Babylon it says for God has put it

into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled that's an amazing verse the Bible never paints a dualistic picture of God pitted against Satan as if they're equals kind of in a do or die match Satan is never God's equal to suggest it is blasphemous and insulting to the glory of God Satan will always and forever do God's bidding no matter how hard he tries to rebel it's God who puts it into the heart of the antichrist and his puppets to unite in their desolation of Babylon it's God who puts it in their heart so that they together wage war against the lamb and his saints so that he can fulfill the word of God that's so much power so much majesty authority glory and that ought to give us hope and endurance when we know that our victory is assured in the end in 2017

Super Bowl 51 the New England Patriots accomplished the largest comeback in Super Bowl history how many of you guys there for that yeah not many I wasn't there either I mean I was there in front of TV is what I mean they came back from a 28-3 deficit in the third quarter to win the game it was an incredible game it's the only football game that I've watched more than once and when I talked to a friend of mine Toby after the game he told me how he told his kids to go to bed during the third quarter because it's over you know they're not coming back from this so go to bed and they went to bed and they missed the greatest comeback of the greatest game in NFL history I'm not biased at all and they lost hope and they despaired but imagine later on if they're re-watching this the recorded game do you think that they will stop watching in the third quarter?

[39 : 25] of course not that's when the fun starts right because you know what the outcome is you know they come back and win in the end they can endure the three quarters of thumping by the Atlanta Falcons because they know what's coming in the end I hesitated to use this illustration because even though there are good good things about sports and in sports that we can enjoy responsibly it also appeals to the vanity and pride of man like all things that are of Babylon and they tend toward idolatry unless checked by the redeeming grace of God but it illustrates the importance of faith and hope when you feel downtrodden by the sinful world and the flesh and the devil when you're weary from your spiritual battle when you're on the verge of despair when you begin to wonder if it's is it worth following Christ?

is it worth bearing all this cost? keep in mind the destruction of the beast and the desolation of Babylon they will make war on the lamb and the lamb will conquer them for he is lord of lords and king of kings and those with him are called and chosen and faithful it's this hope for the end the triumph of the lamb that will enable us to be overcomers instead of suck-comers and that brings me to my final point verse 14 reminds us that we who belong to the lamb are called and chosen and faithful the words called and chosen both refer to God's unilateral act of choosing us his election and his effectual call of his people out of all the nations and out of all the peoples of the world God chose us to be his people and God called us to be his witnesses and to belong to him and as such we should be set apart for God as the bride of the lamb as his bride we should be faithful to him and resist the seductive power of the prostitute there's an implicit command there in describing

God's people as faithful the word faithful is reminiscent of Jesus' command in Revelation 2.10 be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life be faithful trustworthy witnesses just like Jesus but God is not commanding us here to earn his favor by our faithfulness rather the people of God are faithful because they are called and chosen as you saw earlier in when describing the people of the world the dwellers on earth who marvel and follow after the beast it said that they were specifically those whose names were not written in the book of life it's because we are called and chosen that we do not marvel at the beast and follow him but instead remain faithful to the bride of the lamb Babylon the great prostitute serves as literary foil to the church the bride of the lamb in several important ways notice how John is carried away in the spirit into the wilderness in verse 3 where he sees a woman do you remember when another time when John was carried in the spirit into a wilderness to see a woman in chapter 13 or chapter 12 verse 6 and in there he saw a woman in the desert and it was the woman that represented the church the people of God and she was nourished by God in the wilderness but that's contrasted here with this woman who is a prostitute in the wilderness and she instead of being nourished by God is nourished by her sexual immorality intercourse with the people the nations in the languages the contrast is reinforced by the way

Babylon is introduced in verse 1 it says then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me come I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute now compare that to Revelation 21 9 where it says then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the last plagues and spoke to me saying come I will show you the bride the wife of the lamb it may be the exact same angel that's introducing both of these women they're both the angel that had the bowl of the wrath of God and they both use the same formula to introduce them come I will show you the prostitute or the bride the great prostitute is the city of man but the bride of the lamb is the city of God the holy city of Jerusalem it says in chapter 21 verse 10 the prostitute was drunk with the blood of the saints the blood of the martyrs of Jesus but the bride of the lamb is washed clean in the blood of the lamb Revelation 7 14 Babylon has written on her forehead the name

Babylon the great mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations but for new Jerusalem the name of God and of the lamb will be on their foreheads it says in Revelation 21 4 at the end of the end the great prostitute will be desolate and naked but the bride of the lamb will be clothed in white garments it says throughout Revelation no we will not be desolate and abandoned God will dwell with us forever and wipe every tear from our eyes are you desperate and discouraged this morning because of your own sinfulness do you feel defiled by your spiritual adultery do you feel that you're more like the whore Babylon and less like the pure virgin bride of Christ there's hope for you and for all of us because Jesus Christ our bridegroom is also our redeemer contained within the genealogy of Jesus our savior in Matthew chapter 1 is not one prostitute but two prostitutes in the ancestry of Jesus

[45 : 32] Tamar who prostituted herself and Rahab the prostitute in the book of Hosea in order that God might show the Israelites what his relationship with them is like he commands prophet Hosea to take and marry a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord then in Hosea 2.23 God promises that he will redeem his unfaithful whoring people saying I will have mercy on no mercy and I will say to not my people you are my people no mercy and not my people are respectively names of the daughter and son of Hosea and Gomer his unfaithful wife his whoring wife he will say to them to no mercy I will have mercy to not my people you are my people and he shall say you are my God that's what we read in our assurance of pardon from 1 Peter 2.9-10 today but you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people but now you are God's people once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy this is a staggering reality

God out of his love for us arranged for his only son to marry a prostitute in God's grace and mercy the whore becomes the pure virgin bride of the land isn't that why God commands us husbands to love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her by washing her with the water of the word that she might be set apart so he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish we were all once prostitutes in league with Babylon but Jesus sanctified us for himself by dying on the cross for our sins and being raised from the dead

Jesus called us and he chose us to be his holy bride so how can we be faithful to this bridegroom it's by abiding in Jesus the faithful one he's described again and again throughout revelation as the faithful and true one by believing in this gospel of what Jesus has done for us by putting all our faith in Jesus and not in our own righteousness we cling to Jesus and abide in him and in abiding in the faithful one we ourselves are strengthened and enabled to be faithful to him let's pray that God will help us to do that Father thank you for your mercy for sending your only son to take for himself a wife of whoredom so that we might be rescued redeemed cleansed called chosen and what glorious future what glorious reality you impart to us that we get to be the bride of the lamb pure and without blemish because of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross

Lord fill us with the renewed sense of wonder help us instead marveling at the beast and the prostitute help us to grow in our in marveling at in worshiping our Lord Jesus and his wondrous gospel what he has done help us fill us with thanksgiving in response to that in Jesus name we pray amen exhale so receiving induction prayer JEFF you okay