

## **The Woman Atop The Beast (Part 1)**

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On the isle of Patmos, the apostle John stood gaping in astonishment. One of the seven angels who had previously shown him the seven last plagues of God's wrath had turned the man's attention to another amazing vision. The angel had carried him into the wilderness and shown him a woman sitting astride a great scarlet beast.

What so astonished John about this woman was that she was so vile! She herself was a harlot and a mother of harlots, who had committed endless fornication with the kings of the earth. Though she was clothed as a queen with scarlet and purple clothes and adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls, wickedness exuded from her like perfume. In her hand she held a golden cup filled with filthiness and abominations, and she was drunk on the blood of countless true Christians she had killed over the centuries. On her forehead was tattooed:

**MYSTERY,  
BABYLON THE GREAT,  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS  
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS  
OF THE EARTH.**

No wonder John stared at her in horror!

### **The Great Harlot**

This vision of Revelation 17 encapsulates the history of the great false church, just as Revelation 12 prophesies about the true church of God. The description of this horrible woman named "Mystery, Babylon the Great" provides clues to her identity. Much of what is written of her is contained in common biblical symbols or types that the Bible itself interprets.

The only similarity between the two women in Revelation 12 and 17 is that the main character in both chapters is a woman, a biblical type of a church or religious system. Since Israel, under the Old Covenant, was intended to be a theocracy, the prophets often depict the nation as a woman and frequently as an unfaithful wife (Jeremiah 3:1-14; 6:2; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1:2; 2:2). In the New Testament, the apostles continued and expanded this symbolism, applying it to the church (Galatians 4:22-27; Revelation 19:7; 21:9). Notice how Paul uses this imagery in Ephesians 5:23-24, 32:

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. . . . This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

From this point on, however, all similarities end. The woman who rides the beast is a "*great* harlot" (Revelation 17:1); she is famous for her "sexual" prowess! Her fornication is her dominant characteristic. But how does a church or religious system commit fornication? God answers this question in the Old Testament: through idolatry and foreign alliances!

At God's insistence, Hosea took a harlot as a wife to illustrate the similarity between idolatry and fornication or adultery. As part of his prophecy, the prophet writes:

Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery. (Hosea 4:11-13)

Ezekiel uses Israel's example to show that trusting in other nations is also spiritual harlotry:

"You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, . . . with the Assyrians, . . . [and] as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then you were not satisfied. How degenerate is your heart!" says the Lord God, "seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot. . . . Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry." (Ezekiel 16:26, 28-30, 33; see 23:1-35)

For these reasons, God calls this wicked woman riding the beast "a great harlot." Her false religion is based on a syncretistic mixture of Christianity with rank paganism; she has blended the holy with the profane to produce an intoxicating, destructive vintage that has made the world's people drunk. Just this one description enables us to fix her identity as the Roman Catholic Church.

### **The Paganism of Rome**

No other "Christian" organization has so blatantly used syncretism to attract and hold its adherents. The Catholic church, and to a large extent, her daughter Protestant churches, have incorporated countless pagan elements into their worship. From crosses (see *The Cross: Christian Banner or Pagan Relic*) to steeples, from adoration of saints to images of a false Christ, from Easter sunrise services to Christmas Eve masses, heathen, idolatrous elements fill their worship, liturgy and tradition.

When the Emperor Constantine "converted" to Christianity in AD 313, he granted the church official status alongside paganism. This devious political stroke suddenly made him the religious authority over thousands of Christians in the Roman Empire, for since he had legitimized the church, he had to be proclaimed its head. The bishops of the day began calling him "Bishop of bishops," while he himself took the title *Vicarius Christi*, Vicar of Christ. Later, these titles—along with *Pontifex Maximus*, Constantine's title as high priest of the **pagan** Roman religion—passed to the Popes.

As an unbaptized neophyte, he convened the Council of Nicea (AD 325), set its agenda, opened it with a speech and greatly influenced its discussions. During this Council, the Catholic Church determined the date and observance of Easter, officially received the unbiblical doctrine of the Trinity, and eased the admission of pagans and their practices into the church ("Nicea, Council of," *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1910, Vol. 19, pp. 640-642).

Maybe the most blatant idolatry in Roman Catholicism is their adoration of Mary, the mother of Christ. On the basis of one scripture, Luke 1:28, Catholic theologians have built a major tenet of their faith: "And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you;

blessed are you among women!" With this, they elevate her nearly to a goddess (if not in fact), pray to her incessantly, claim to see her in visions and hear her in dreams and trances, and worship statues of her in their churches and cathedrals!

Two quotations from supposed saints of Catholicism will suffice to illustrate how far Mary worship goes:

» There is no one, O most holy Mary . . . who can be saved or redeemed but through thee. . . . (St. Germanus, quoted in St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, 1931, p. 171.)

» As we have access to the Eternal Father only through Jesus Christ, so have we access to Jesus Christ only through Mary. By thee we have access to the Son, O blessed finder of grace, bearer of life, and mother of salvation. . . . (St. Bernard, *ibid.*)

The Catholic Church has elevated Mary to divine status and given her titles and responsibilities reserved to God the Father and His Son! In fact, she becomes the third member of a trinity modeled after the pagan trinities of ancient times. These heathen trinities, found in most polytheistic religions, follow the Father-Mother-Son pattern: Osiris, Isis and Horus; Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz; Zeus, Diana, Dionysus; Jupiter, Venus and Cupid; etc.

In like manner, some Catholics attribute to Mary the position and characteristics of the third person of their unscriptural trinity, the Holy Spirit. The official publication of "The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima," boasting 22 million members, claims:

Mary is so perfectly united with the Holy Spirit that He acts only through His spouse. . . . All our life, every thought, word, and deed is in Her hands . . . at every moment, She Herself must instruct, guide, and transform each one of us into Herself, so that not we but She lives in us, as Jesus lives in Her, and the Father in the Son. (*Soul Magazine*, November-December 1984, p.4.)

If she has these powers and characteristics, then Mary must be God! There can be no doubt that this adoration of Mary is simply a modern manifestation of goddess worship that began over 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia! In fact, one of her titles, as used by the present Pope, a devoted Marian, is "Queen of Heaven" (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25)!

### **"Purple and Scarlet"**

The woman on the beast is "arrayed in purple and scarlet" (Revelation 17:4), both of which are colors of pagan and "Christian" Rome. When the soldiers mocked Jesus, hailing him as "King of the Jews," they put a scarlet robe on him (Matthew 27:27-29). John's gospel says it was purple (John 19:2, 5). Whatever color it was (one authority says the ancients did not discriminate between colors as closely as we do), it connoted power and authority, and both these colors became known as "royal" colors.

Both of these colors are prominent within the Roman Catholic Church. On special days, Church officials wear a *cappa magna*, a cloak with a long train and a hooded shoulder cape. For bishops, it is made of purple wool, and for cardinals, scarlet silk. For the pope, this item of clothing is red velvet or

red serge. The official garb of the Catholic clergy is the *cassock* or *soutane*, a close-fitting, ankle-length robe. "The color for bishops and other prelates is purple, for cardinals scarlet. . ." (*Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1991, p. 175, 178).

[TO BE CONTINUED]