the most dangerous woman in the world

(Revelation 17)

If you do a Google search for the most dangerous men and women on earth (past or present), you will discover a long list of drug traffickers, spies, terrorists, serial killers, hit-men and women, heads of drug cartels, and crime-syndicate bosses.

And when you read about the evils that these men and women have perpetrated on, not only individuals, but, sometimes on entire countries or ethnic groups, you recognize just how destructive a single person (along with their followers) can be.

This morning, we are studying Revelation 17. Revelation 17 concerns the future just prior to the return of Christ. There are two main characters in this literary drama. One is pictured as a prostitute and the other as a monstrous beast.

This morning, we will focus on the prostitute (next week, the beast). Who is this prostitute? What does she represent? What part does she play in the world today as well as the world just prior to Christ’s return? And what difference does this make to us as followers of Christ?

**Title:** The Most Dangerous Woman in the World

(Prayer)

In the 60’s and 70’s, if you asked a church-going person in the heartland of America their opinion of who the most dangerous woman in the world was, they probably would have replied, Madalyn Murray O’Hair. In the year I was born, 1960, she she filed a lawsuit against the Baltimore Public School System, naming her son William J. Murray III as plaintiff. She said that its practices of mandatory prayer and required reading of the Bible were unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld her position with an 8-1 ruling in 1963. That same year she founded the “American Atheists” organization. For years to come, she would oppose the things of God over and over again, but not for long. She was murdered in 1995 by one of her former employees who later led authorities to her body, her son’s, and her grandaughter’s.

From time immortal, there have always been women (and men) just like Madelyn Murray O’Hair. Opposed to the Word of God…opposed to the people of God…opposed to Judeo-Christian values.

But the most the most dangerous woman in the world is described for us in Revelation 17. In Revelation 17, we are getting God’s view of her, not man’s. Mankind thinks she’s great, God sees her as filthy and detestable. Man sees her as wealthy and beautiful, God sees her as a drunken prostitute. This morning we will discover her identity and consider her judgment from the hand of God. Look at chap. 17, v.1:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “﻿Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.﻿”

**Characteristics of the harlot:**

1. **She influences the entire world (1-2)**

“many waters”

“kings of the earth”

“inhabitants of the earth”

1. **Her influence is extremely destructive (2)**

She seduces world rulers and makes earth’s inhabitants drunk.

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3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

1. **She is supported by the man of sin (3)**

“…sitting on a scarlet beast…”

(We will consider this beast next week but suffice it to say that we shall see that this scarlet beast is none other than the end time world ruler called the man of sin.)

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4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

1. **She is extremely wealthy (4a)**

“arrayed in purple”
“adorned with gold, precious stones, pearls, a golden cup”

1. **She is detestable to God (4b)**

“abominations…filthiness”

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

1. **She is not literal Babylon but mystery Babylon (5a)**

“Mystery, Babylon the great…”

She is not is not the city of Babylon (in modern Iraq). That city is on land that is flat. As we shall see, this woman is associated with a mountainous region.

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

1. **Her children are as corrupt as she is (5b)**

“the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth”

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6 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 marveled with great amazement.

1. **She is a murderer of God’s people (6)**

She is “…drunk with the blood of saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus…”

At this point, John is incredibly amazed at what he is seeing in this vision---end of v. 6--- “And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”

Verse 7 continues:

7 “But the angel (the angel who was giving John this vision) said to me, “﻿Why 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 the ten horns.”

The angel tells John that he is going to tell him who this mysterious woman is. He will interpret the vision he has just given him.

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9 “﻿Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are **seven mountains** on which the woman sits.

1. **She sits on seven mountains (9)**

Most of you know what this is referring to---there is a famous city on earth called “The City on Seven Hills.” (I will give you the name in just a minute).

So now we know that this evil woman symbolizes a city.

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16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

1. **She will be destroyed (16)**

Rev 18 is an entire chapter about her destruction----and there is a very good chance from the data given in chapter 18 that her destruction will be from a nuclear attack---it takes place in **one hour** and it says that people don’t want to go near it—chapter 18 says that they stand **at a distance**.

So what city does this woman represent? (Look at verse 18).

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reignsover the kings of the earth.﻿

Key phrase: **which reigns**

If we miss this, we will make a mess as we try to interpret Rev 17.

The angel tells John that the woman is the great city **which reigns** (present tense) over the kings of the earth.

**Question:** As John penned the book of Revelation, what city ruled the earth?

1. **She is the city of Rome (18)**

John lived in the time of the mighty Roman Empire.

So what do we learn from all of this?

Lessons:

One thing we learn is that **God will one day judge Rome for the way that it has treated the people of God** in history and how it will treat them during the tribulation period.

(17:6) She was **drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.**

(18:20) “﻿Rejoice over her, O heaven, and **you holy apostles and prophets**, for God has avenged **you** on her!﻿”

It was Rome who killed all of Jesus’ apostles (except for Judas) and one day in the future, as Rome becomes the most prosperous city on earth in close collaboration with the man of sin, it will be responsible for the deaths of many more believers.

Another thing we learn is that **God hates idolatry and false religion**.

The woman is a harlot---a prostitute. She seduces people and leads them away from God.

When man looks at religion, he sees all of the statues, and rituals, and fancy garments, and the apparent holiness of the leaders and followers----when God looks at it, He sees a prostitute. He sees blasphemy. He sees drunkenness. He sees a woman who causes both kings and the common man to get drunk spiritually. In other words, she is very capable of leading people away from the one true God and into a religion that leads to hell.

Do you know who the hardest people to reach with the gospel are? Religious people. Why? Because they think, because of their religion, that God is pleased with their lives.

*Why do I need to be saved? I have been going to church longer than you are alive!!*

**Application**

We need to help people out of false religion with the truth!!!