

Book of Revelation – The Sea Beast -Revelation 13:5-8 in connection with Revelation 17

Series REV-30

Part Ib

ADDENDUM

“The Mystery of Godliness” and “The Mystery of Iniquity” –Their Vital Relationship to Understanding Revelation 17 Correctly

Based on our study of Revelation 13, it is essential, as I’ve mentioned, we bring in Revelation 17. Much detail is given and in different language to see a large picture of the work of the “Sea Beast” mentioned in Rev 13. But as the title above indicates, we need to realize here that the study of one “mystery” has a bearing on the other “mystery.” The Revelation of Jesus is an unfolding of the ‘mystery of godliness. Over the last half of this great book, we will see more the unfolding of the other mystery, “the mystery of iniquity’ or ‘lawlessness.’

Rev 17:5, 7

Mysteries regarding iniquity are mentioned in Rev.17 There is the name of Babylonian “whore”: “Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT.” Later, the angel stated to John: “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her” (vs.5,7). Thus, there are two parties at least involved in “the mystery of iniquity”—the woman and the beast.

Two great mysteries are revealed in the Scriptures:

- 1) The Mystery of Godliness (1 Tim 3:16)
- 2) The Mystery of Iniquity (2 Thess 2:7)

The Mystery of Godliness

In order to show their vital relationship to the mysteries of Rev.17, it is necessary to point out the underlying principle which governs our understanding of such passages in the book of Revelation. We have seen the connection between Jesus, Jehovah, and the Almighty, in the Revelation—e.g. wherever the designation “The Almighty” is employed, it is intended that automatically God’s people will know that it refers to the Almighty power Jesus employs in keeping His covenant in behalf of His people.

The Mystery of Iniquity

When the “mystery of iniquity” (the mystery of lawlessness) is referred to, it is intended that God’s people will naturally consider the bearing it has upon “the ‘mystery of Godliness.’” The Apocalypse places these two contending forces in such a

way that when one is under consideration the other will naturally present itself to the thoughtful reader.

The essence of “the mystery of iniquity” is deception—to paint a picture opposite of reality—to make wrong look right, error appear as truth, darkness as light and light as darkness. Jesus declared of Satan: “He...abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him...for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

Lucifer began his rebellion “with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God” . . .By disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood, he had gained an advantage. Until fully developed, it could not be made appear the evil thing it was; his disaffection would not be seen to be rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, or see to what his work was leading...Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles.” (PP 37-42)

In the closing scenes of the great drama of evil, Satan will work more speciously than ever under the guise of a benefactor while leading the world to its doom.

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. . . And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils.” (GC 589, 590)

The Revelator emphasizes that it is by deception that the world is led to war against God and seek to slay His people—see Rev 13:13-17; 16:13, 14; 19:20.

As the drama of the Sea Beast (first beast) of Rev 13:1-8 unfolds [as we’ve already begun to look at] and additional detail re. this beast and a “woman” that sits on this beast is laid out in Rev 17, we should ever keep in mind that “the dragon” and “the serpent” of Rev 12, from the commencement when war broke out in heaven till, the end of sin comes at the close of the millennium is working as “the mystery of iniquity” or “lawlessness.” We will more clearly understand this in Rev 17, but it is also prevalent in Rev 13.

One of the principles of biblical interpretation, we’ve come to grasp is to let the Bible interpret itself. In the prophetic books, we notice this is prevalent in the use of symbols. Note the following:

Blasphemy against God

In Rev 13:6, we find that the beast has “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”

In our last study, we came to see the Bible definition of blasphemy as recorded in Matt. 26:65, Mark 2:5-7, and John 10:33. But there is more to consider on this theme.

In Rev 2:20-24, the Lord employs the symbol of “Jezebel” to portray the apostasy of the Papal power. As indicated in this prophecy, the success which came to the apostate church, was due to the fact that she professed to be “a prophetess” – assuming the garments of the servant of the Lord caused many in the past, in the present, and particularly in the near future, *to be deceived* by her false teachings.

The expression employed in Rev 2:20: “To teach and to seduce My servants” implies the teaching of error as though it were the truth. It is in this way that the beast has “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (13:6). To claim to be representing Christ whilst working contrary to the Bible is to commit blasphemy—especially when making the claim of being the Vicar of the Son of God, and at the same time persecuting the people of God.

“The mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16). Though Jesus Christ, the only One equal with God, came to earth to perfectly obey the law of God and through His Spirit, bring the living Christ into His followers. Thus, the mystery of Godliness is continued in the lives of all who though buffeted by satanic hatred, obey all of Heaven’s holy commandments, through the mysterious union of the Divine in the human soul, accomplished by faith. (see Mark 4:11; Eph 3:9, 10; 6:19; Col 1:26,27, etc.) How men born to sin can be changed to cease from sinning is a divine mystery.

“The mystery of iniquity,” we know from the principle of contrasts revealed in the Apocalypse, refers to those who continue the state of rebellion which prompted Lucifer to wage war against God, His Commandments, and those who are loyal to the government of Heaven. In Rev 13:5, 6—we see this war initially includes, “great words, even blasphemies” against the above entities. The “harlot of Babylon, described in Rev. 17, persecutes those who do obey God and thus bears evidence that she is led by Satan into hatred for Christ and His people.

The following table below shows the imitations of those of Jesus:

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS	THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY
Rev 5:6 - “A Lamb <i>as it had been slain</i> ”	Rev 13:8 – One of the heads of the beast <i>as though it had been slain</i>
Rev 1:18 – “I am He that <i>liveth</i> , and was dead . . . I am <i>alive</i> for evermore.	Rev 13:3 – “His death-stroke was <i>healed</i> (R.V.) [i.e. smitten unto death.]
Rev 2:8 – “Was dead and is <i>alive</i> ”	Rev 13:12 – “Whose death-stroke was <i>healed.</i> ” (R.V.)
Rom 6:9 – “Christ being raise from the dead dieth no more.”	Rev 13:14 – “Beast received stroke of death “and lived” (R.V.)
Rev 1:8 [Jesus: Jehovah – “He which <i>is</i> , and which <i>was</i> , and which <i>is to come.</i> ”	Rev 17:8 – “The beast that . . . <i>was</i> , and <i>is not</i> , and <i>is about to come up.</i>
Rev 11:17 – “O Lord God...which <i>art</i> , and <i>wast</i> , and <i>art to come.</i> ”	Rev 17:11 – “The beast that <i>was</i> , and <i>is not.</i> ”

In conclusion of this segment let us look at a few thoughts which will help us with understanding this table.

The words of 13:3, which we've already looked at in our prior two lessons on this chapter, speaks distinctly of *death and of resurrection from the dead. The whole representation, in short, of the beast implies that it had not merely died as Christ had died, but that it had also risen as He had;* and it is not simply as the beast 'slaughtered unto death,' but *as the beast with 'its death-stroke healed,' that in chap.13:3, it received the homage of the world."*

The emphasis is not on the beast *receiving* the "death-stroke" but upon its *resurrection* from the dead. The *healing* of the "death-stroke" looms large in Rev 13 and it is *this* feature that is emphasized in Rev 17. The world wonders after the beast *when* it emerges from "the abyss".

The failure to grasp the essential fact that the prophecy of Rev 13 emphasizes the healing of "the death-stroke," or the resurrection of the power of the beast, has caused Protestants generally to be blind to the importance of God's last-day Message of warning against the restored power of the beast which is to be re-enforced by apostate Protestantism.

Hopefully, this will assist us as we march through, especially Rev 13 in connection with Rev 17, to see these "mysteries" rightly understood are part of grasping more fully the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We now, must pray for wisdom to know how to rightly apply it to our lives, so that the principles of 'Babylon' will be rooted out, by the principles of the Lamb.

(Adapted from the book, *The Woman and the Beast in the Book of Revelation*, Chp 6 & 7, by Louise Were)

