

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

Revelation - Chapter 17. Part II.

The Woman Arrayed in Purple and Scarlet – A symbol of False Religious Systems

Editorial Note: This is a lecture by Sidney Cox that was part of a series of lectures on the Book of the Revelation that he taught while on the theological teaching faculty at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute during the early part of 1962. He was 75 years of age at the time.

During the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” Toccoa Falls Bible Institute was closely affiliated with the CMA, provided support to the Institute and the Institute sent many of its graduates into ministry within CMA churches. CMA and The Salvation Army, in which Sidney Cox served as an officer for 30 years previously in his life, share a similar theology and emphasis in Christian outreach.

From 1956 – 1960, Sidney and Violet Cox lived in Miami, Florida where Sidney was on the theological teaching faculty of the Miami Bible Institute, another CMA supported institution. They moved to Toccoa Falls, Georgia in 1960, where he served on the staff at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute from 1960 – 1962.

As a lecture, he was obviously assuming that his students had prepared for class by reading and studying the pertinent scripture and other class material. Thus, his comments were not like a sermon, but lectures to enhance the students’ theological understanding. He emphasized a detailed study of the scripture and incorporated analysis that he gained from his study of Bible commentaries and books on the related subject matter. These lectures are remarkably free of any personal opinions, personal illustrations or “sermonizing” of any kind. While at other times in his career he was very much the preacher and evangelist, in these late-in-life roles of Bible Professor, he was very much the educator.

Lastly, it might be helpful to at least comment on the historical context in which these lectures were delivered. Many biblical scholars of that day associated some of what is found in the Book of Revelation with the Catholic Church – symbols of paganism, the movement of Satan/antichrist to establish one world church, etc. Many people viewed the Catholic Church with much skepticism and fear. Further, John F. Kennedy had just been elected the first Catholic president of the United States in 1960. His election was quite controversial and many non-Catholics were concerned about Kennedy’s catholic background. Elements of these concerns and mindset are found in these lectures. In 2008, many of these fears have been discredited and some would find them to be offensive and intolerant, but they were quite prevalent and not at all unusual in 1962.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

And, I want us to keep in mind that in this chapter there are two definite sections to it. You can not always find a chapter so definitely divided as you can in this one. This first part of it of course is what this angel, one of those who were pouring out the vials of God's wrath – what he showed to John. That's the first part of it, and that goes down to about verse 6 or 7, and then from then on, you find explanations because here is this strange thing emphasized here — I say strange because it isn't really strange at all — but you find that these things that appear in the Book of Revelation are also explained in it. We would find considerable rest of mind if we could accept the explanations that are given in the book where the truth is revealed, because it's nearly always so. You won't find it so in every case, you'll have to look somewhere else to find it in some cases. But in many cases you will find the explanation is given right in the book itself. We found that right from the very beginning when we began to see the Lord in the midst of seven golden candle sticks and immediately we are told what these candle sticks are, etc.

Now you find that happen so frequently through the Book of Revelation, and here is a chapter where you find it very distinctly. Where, down to a word that perhaps will help us in our thinking to sort of fasten on a little artificial thing, but you go down this chapter until you come to the word, 'admiration.' Go down it in your Bible because this is one class where we're going to refer more to our Bibles than we are to anything else.

Where do you find the word, 'admiration? At the end of Verse 6, it's the last of Verse 6, "And I saw this with great admiration." 'Amazement' is the word that should be there, because admiration may carry with it the thought of approval. When you admire something, you usually approve of it. But I think the better word there, and you'll find it so in a good many commentaries is the word, 'amazement.' "And I stood and looked at it in amazement." But let's accept the word for a moment that's here. "I looked at it with great admiration." So you've got the first part of it where your key word is admiration, and the last part of it, your key word is explanation. And you've got the two things side by side. Admiration. Explanation. And in the first part, John sees things, and then in the last part the spirit explains them to him. And you will find that this is the pattern of it there.

Now I want us to go down if you please very simply and without any attempt particularly at exposition in this, I want us to go down quietly and see what each verse says in this chapter. It's one of the key chapters of course, because the next thing you find is destruction that is coming upon another section of this world setup, and then in 19, the final judgment that comes upon those that are responsible for it, because it's in verse 19 that you find here is the judgment upon the satanic trinity, and then the coming of our Lord in power and great glory. So that we're heading right in to the last things.

Now, one thing we have noticed, forgive me for reminding you of this, but we have noticed that judgment in general falls. We have watched judgment coming upon the earth. But now in these chapters, we watch judgment coming upon some particular thing. For instance, upon the religious setup that's there. That's what we find here in Chapter 17. When we get into Chapter 18, you'll find judgment falling not only upon the earth indiscriminately, but upon the commercial setup. And then finally, you find judgment falling upon those who are responsible for it – the Satanic Trinity - the beast and the false prophet and Satan himself, and you find what's going to happen to them. Now this is judgment coming at some particular point, and we find it there.

Now let's look and see what these verses say. Let's read them first of all and then just check on one or two points regarding them.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials and talked with me saying unto me, "Come hither and I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."¹

Not let's stop and say, from whence did that angel come? Now we have noticed something unusual about these angels. It's not unusual to see an angel involved in judgment; we've seen that all the way along. Angels that blow trumpets, angels that pour out the vials of God's wrath. But there was something unusual about these angels, this last series of seven. From whence did they come? They came out of the temple, that's right. In other words, this particular judgment now has, as the basis of it, a religious purpose. It is the destroying of a false religious system. Now we've known this has been going on all the way along, now you get the detail of it. That's the reason why out of the temple from which originate religious systems – it's the symbol of a place where religious systems flow from – from which they come. Now, here are these angels coming out of it. That was one thing we noticed that was different from the others.

When the angels sounded the trumpet judgments, they were lined up in some form or other and sounded their trumpets, and down came the judgments of God. But now they come out from this priestly background and as a matter of fact, there is a suggestion of priestly garments upon it. All of which we do not understand, but we do know this – they are on a mission that has to do with a religious purpose. They are now pouring out judgments upon a false religious system. And the false religious system we find coming out of the midst of the peoples of the earth. It's a system in which all of the peoples of the earth are involved; and in addition to that, it is represented by the figure of a woman. Now an evil woman, that's true, because false religious systems are evil in their essence, because the heart of every one of them is setting up their own center of worship rather than accepting God as the center of their worship. Every one of them is setting up some particular point for worship. That's the center of every false religion, no matter what it is; and we use the word, 'false religion' there as anything that is opposed to that which is revealed in the word of God. Not in a nasty way at all. Not in a way necessarily, for the moment, where there's any criticism about it. But a false religion is something that's contrary to this. That's the general term in which we use it, and every last one of them have got some way of worshipping God, and quietly, some other God other than the one that's revealed in this book.

Now that's the center of it and here they're coming, these angels to pour judgment upon a false religious system that is pictured before us. We have the visual aid to bring it down somewhere within the scope of our minds of a woman who is essentially evil. Now don't forget the way in which the woman is described; not only described her, because one can be evil in one's own self. But the word that is used here could describe her implies an unlawful relationship. Now that's the meaning of it, of course; and we don't need to labor that point. But here is an evil system that is involved in an unlawful, ungodly relationship. Now one religious system can only be in unlawful relationship with another system. And the system with which this religious center is in unlawful relationship is with the governments and peoples of the earth. And so you find a religious system in unlawful relationship with a governmental system; and the two of them are linked together in a

¹ Revelation 17:1.

fashion that the only word that can describe it is the word that is used of the woman herself, and the act itself of bringing them together in this unlawful relationship is the word, the word we don't like at all that's in this chapter, it's the word, 'fornication. Now, when you find an unlawful relationship, that's the word to describe it. There are other words to describe it in which you get certain detail there, but generally speaking, that's it – it means an unlawful, ungodly relationship. Now here is a false religion, in an ungodly relationship with world powers – things that come up out of the sea.

Now what kind of world powers would they be in which this false religious system enters into a relationship? They of course would be equally evil; and the whole system as you see it here is an evil religious system coming into a relationship with an evil governmental system. And all we have to do is to look back and find out who's the center of it. Here is somebody who came riding on a white horse, 'conquering and to conquer,' organizing a world against God. Now this is the thing you see: he's using two things. He's using religion on the one side and he's using commerce on the other.

Now you've got three things as we said right from the beginning of this study. You find three things that are going to be organized against of God in the center of it Satan and those that represent him, a false religion, a false government and commerce that is described in its falseness as dealing in the souls of men. Now I don't think that's a matter at all that implies slavery. It may, of course, I don't know. But it implies that commerce had become so important that men had sold their souls for it. It dealt in the souls of men. Now when you get into the 18th chapter you'll find that's the description of commercial Babylon.

Now we've got these things; and here religion and the governments are entering an unlawful relationship. Now don't forget this – that we have sinister characters back of all this picture and one thing that we need to remember, and we need to remember it and tuck it away in our own hearts and perhaps pass it on to somebody else, is that Satan will use anything and anybody as long as he can get something out of it. But the moment that it becomes useless, or an inconvenience or an embarrassment to Satan, then that thing is put on one side.

Now you've got exactly that thing here, here is the picture, this strange figure of this woman decked in all the garments of a false religion with the emphatic colors of it – purple and scarlet, with all the pearls and the rest of it. And don't forget my dear that wherever you find pearls, you are looking at something that has a Gentile background. Now this isn't a picture of the nations of the world with the little nation of Palestine in the center of it, not at all. This is the picture of the gentile nations of the world. The reason I said that a moment ago about the pearls is this: that the pearl is something that the Gentile valued, but the Jew did not. The Jew had no sense of the value of the pearl. He may have had some sense of it so far as its intrinsic worth is concerned, but it never took any part at all in the Jewish setup of things. For example, when you look at the high priest who typifies things of Judaism more than anybody else – more than any other one person – when you look at him in his garments, and you look at him with his breastplate in which there are twelve jewels, you will not find a pearl there. There's no pearl there at all. Now the Jew had no sense of the value of a pearl, but the Gentile did. In the dire days of Gentile monarchs, pearls appear very frequently, and always in a position of great importance. But you never find it anywhere in the

Jewish setup of things. For some reason or other, they had other things, but not pearls, that seemed to be of value to them.

And so when you find this woman, coming out of the midst of the nations dressed in these garments that indicate a false religion that appeals to sight and sense, rather than to faith, because that's the picture you've got. When you have a faith in view, you don't ever need to dress up faith in purple or scarlet garments, never. Doesn't have to be that way at all – in fact is isn't. You can't dress faith up in those garments. The moment that you see those garments, you're looking at a fake. You're always looking at it. Whenever you find anything that's dressed up in that which appeals to sight and sense, you automatically put faith on one side. Faith doesn't wear those garments.

You remember the thing that we dropped in our last class that there are two ways of dressing folks – Satan's way and God's way. Satan decks them and God adorns them. Now those are the words that I used, and here you find somebody 'decked,' because that's the word that's here in this chapter – decked in these garments. You don't find the word very often but whenever you do, you are listening and looking at something that has a satanic origin, always, whenever you find anything 'decked out' like that. It's just as well to remember, because we hear the words occasionally right now, don't we? Every once in a while you hear the word describing somebody's garments, "she's 'decked out' in this, or that or the other." It's just as well. We don't need to enter into any argument about it or do any thinking except quietly on the inside. And when you hear the word 'decked' we can say in our hearts, "Well we know the meaning of that." We know who it is that's responsible for 'decking' anything, or anybody for that matter. And it's just as well for us to be intelligent about it.

Here is this woman riding upon this beast, the picture of the one controlling the governments of the world. We saw him rise out of the sea in the 13th chapter. Now remember that she is riding him, this beast. The woman is riding the beast because, for the moment, that's the way he wants it. He will use a false religion until it becomes an inconvenience and an embarrassment and until it pushes itself into the place that he wants to occupy. Now here is a false religion that is demanding worship and honor and control over the thinking of folks. Now that's alright, he let's that go and allows this picture to be as he wants it to be for the time being. But the moment that thing becomes an embarrassment or intrudes itself into his particular sphere, then that is destroyed.

Now let's go back and see if we can fit that into something that we've already seen, and without getting off the track at all, let's see if we can fit it in chronologically. When was it that anti-christ who came with the idea of the world worshipping him and the false prophet whose business it was to see that the world did worship him? Who was it who set up the image in the temple which is only another way of saying, "The world must now worship this, and the one who is represented by it?" Where did we find that? Where did find this picture of the image set up in the temple, and the false prophet causing everybody to fall down and worship it? Where did that appear? In what chapter, let me put it a little nearer. In what chapter do you find that? (inaudible responses). No, it's the 13th, Jack, it's the 13th chapter where the beast out of the sea appears and where you find the image set up in the temple, and the false prophet compelling people to worship, and causing this miracle of the image to speak and then stamping everybody who will not do this, so that they can't either buy or sell without this mark of the beast upon them - this mark of ownership. Now you find that.

Now you find in this Chapter 17, as we follow so frequently, a thing that is implied is now explained. This thing that we're looking at in Chapter 17 where the beast finally destroys the woman, throws this thing off and puts it back into a place of destruction. This must have happened right back there in that 13th chapter, as far as we can do with it chronologically. Because here is the point where the beast comes now and claims universal worship. Now when he claims universal worship, the presence of a false religion becomes an inconvenience to him, and so he gets rid of it. It has been fine for his purpose up to now, but now he's going to be the one who is to be worshipped, because finally we see the great desire of the satanic trinity coming out. The great desire is to be worshipped.

Now when Satan cast out of Heaven back there in the book of Isaiah says, "I will be like God," he was not merely thinking about controlling the things that God has created. He was going further back than that. What he wanted was this universe to bow down and worship him as the universe was worshipping God; and he says, "I will be like God." Now you see this inward thing that's in the heart of the satanic trinity coming out. And here is the image set up in the temple. Here is the compulsion of this worship in the 13th chapter; and if you do not worship, this is the time when this terrible thing of dealing with them through starvation and banishment and the rest of it is seen. Now here is the point then where chronologically, the woman who is the false system of religion is now put on one side. When he demands absolute and continuous worship, then other things must go. There are moments when Satan will not allow anything else but his will in the lives of those that he controls.

Now let's look and see again what we find here. One of the judgment angels saying, and I have here in the notes, this is a key phrase, "I will show unto thee." You find it a good many times. It's an angel that had been involved in judgment, and in judgment upon a religious system. The idolatrous and apostate church that comes out of peoples and nations and tongues, and you find here is the thing that appears in verse one – the stage setting of it. Verse 2 you find there with whom the kings of this earth had committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth had been made drunk with the wine of her fornication – terrible figures that we find in here. But this is the thing that you see in the center of the stage – an apostate church, drunk with power, and when you get down a line or two, you find drunk with something else as well – with the blood of the saints.

Now when you get power that can shed blood, you have the most dreadful thing the world knows anything about. And when it is religious power that has the authority to shed blood, or does, then it becomes all the worse. Governmental power that can shed blood is dreadful; but the most terrible power that can shed blood is religious power.

Now here you find this symbol of an apostate church that is now being brought into this position where all the world recognizes it, and the great world religion is all here. You can be quite sure that this is the thing that we are looking at in embryo in the very days in which we live. Because one of the things you are hearing about all the way through is the "world religion," the "world religion." And it's not merely a matter of various religious cults and sects and denominations that are being brought together. The moment they come together you hear the next thing – we must now come into some alliance with the Roman Catholic Church. And you always hear that wherever you find a union of churches, the next step is the union with this. Now you can be quite sure that whenever

there is any union with the Roman Catholic Church of any kind, any where, any time, it's only a matter of time before the Roman Catholic Church takes over and assumes absolute control over the whole situation. It has never been any other way. It never will be any other way. It is absolutely impossible for coexistence of any kind with the Roman Catholic Church, unless that church exercises absolute authority. There is no such thing. Now that's the thing that we're watching there, the beginning of things. The sort of appearance of it there that will come to a head in this day that we're talking about and is revealed here.

Here is the wine of her, 'fornication.' The great thing that you see here, a great "world religion" that will include all. Now this is the thing that you're hearing, and I want to tell you this, my dear. There are folks that are just drunk with that idea right now. Everywhere. Now when you find a figure like this, startling as it is, objectionable as it is in many ways, you find them drunk with the wine of their fornication. You've only got to look around to find that the sign of it is already here. There are folks that are just drunk with this idea of a "one world religion."

Now here you find the beginning of it. Notice again, she is not only drunk, this woman, with the power that comes to her, because of her alliance with the nations of the world, and her seeming control over them. But you find that she is drunk with something else, with the blood of those who have been slaughtered. Now don't forget that when you talk about that, you not only talk about those who are going to be slaughtered during the time of the tribulation, and the world will run red with martyr blood during that time, as we have seen from various other things that have appeared. But don't forget that there have been rivers of martyr blood all the way down, right from the very beginning.

Martyr blood has flowed over the earth;, and this false religion has been involved in so much of it., Because while we talk about it as being one thing, don't forget that there isn't one single phase of that which we speak of as the Roman Catholic Church – it's a misnomer, because it isn't a church at all. But when we speak of it, don't forget that there isn't one single thing about it that didn't come from paganism. It didn't originate in the Roman Catholic Church at all. All they've done is to just smear Christian terms and that sort of thing over something that was essentially pagan all the way through. Every single thing that you can find in it, you can find in the pagan church. When, in the old days of the Babylon of years and years and years ago, when into the mysteries of those religions one became, or was allowed to come in on the basis of initiation, for you had to be initiated into it. But when you did, the very first thing that happened was, the initiate had to confess the sins of his life to the priest that was representing into which he was coming. The very first thing he had to do, and that of course put him in the control of the priest from then on. And the confessional is not something that has come to a head here, and is a distinctive thing within this religion that we're talking about - not at all. It's something that came out of paganism – all their old garments, all these fish-shaped hats and stuff that they've got there. Everything they've got has come out of paganism - all they have done is to smear something that looks like Christianity over it. Every single thing that came – holy water, is as much a part of the old Babyonish religion long before the times of Christ. It was all a part of it. There isn't one thing that you can see in it, not one thing. The blasphemy of the mass is something that is described for us in the book of Jeremiah in meticulous detail, and was one of the things that caused the departure of Israel from the way that God had set before them. How that the woman had to be placated by the breaking of the wafers. You can find the whole description of it in the book of Jeremiah. The whole thing there, the "queen

of heaven” is the title of her in the book of Jeremiah, and how there in order to come into favor with her, the wafers had to be broken in worship of her, this one. And you can find it all there. There isn’t one single thing there that did not come out of paganism.

By the way, that’s not just me talking. If you want to get the book, I suppose you all know about it. But if you want to get the book there that will straighten you out, or give you the facts on that sort of thing if you need it, or if you want help, you read, *The Two Babylons* by Hislop², and you’ll find a copy of it in the library, that very wonderful little thing that we have over there on the other side of the campus.

I was talking to the folks in another class this morning, how great is our privilege to walk into a little room and find ourselves surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses,” and one that you need to check on – one authoritative work on that sort of thing is *The Two Babylons* by Hislop.

Well, here we are. This woman intoxicated in two ways: with the sense of her power, her control over the nations of the world. There is nothing that will make religion drunk with power quicker than that. Now the other thing is, she was drunk with the wine, if you like, of the blood that had been shed. And if there is a nauseating mixture, it is just that. And here is this woman, with this golden thing in her hand filled with this abomination.

Somebody has said, there’s only one thing that will destroy that and that is the golden vials of the wrath of God. And that is the very thing that we find poured out. That’s the thing that is before us. Now, it looks in verse three there, follow it, that the apostate church for a time exercises control over the satanic alliance of the nations. Look at verse four – the description of the woman. Note the color of her garments, the jewels, the golden cup and its terrible contents. The golden vial of the wrath of God is the only answer to this blasphemy. Now in verse five, look at the mark upon the forehead there. Contrast that with God’s seal – the name of the lamb and of the Father. Look at verse two; she too is intoxicated with the blood of the saints and martyrs - an astonishing sight. And here is somebody who in the awfulness of that moment says, “What an amazing sight.”

Now the angel says to John, “I’m going to show you what these things mean.” And he does; he immediately begins to talk and give the explanations of it all. The mystery is now explained. The woman, the beasts and the governments, these things that are not mysteries anymore, although every last one of them exercised mysterious powers, and involved in them as we have already suggested, certain things that are mysterious. We do not comprehend at all the power of the mystery of certain things. For instance, I think we suggested in our previous lesson that we have no idea of the power there is in that moment of mystery when in the hush of some Roman Catholic cathedral a bell rings and you can just feel it. It’s a very interesting experience. If you haven’t had it, it would be a good thing to go sometime. But you can just feel the whole thing around. And the whole process goes on there, the performance I was going to say, perhaps I should have said that.

² *The Two Babylons* was an anti-Catholic religious pamphlet produced initially by the Scottish theologian and Protestant Presbyterian Alexander Hislop in 1853. It was later expanded in 1858 and finally published as a book in 1919. Its central theme is its allegation that the Roman Catholic Church is a veiled continuation of the pagan religion of Babylon, the veiled paganism being the product of a millennia old conspiracy. It remains widely available in 2008, but it has been discredited by certain scholars and has proven to be a controversial work. John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 28, 2008.

But the whole thing goes on up to this moment. This is the thing. This is the climax. And here is this priest there with these things in his hands standing before the alter, and in the moment when the bell rings and he does something with this, that's the moment when it actually becomes the blood and body of our Lord. And there before them this blasphemous individual drinks – they don't drink it, he does. He drinks the wine that is now supposed to be the blood of the Lord Jesus. And breaks and takes into his mouth – they don't take it, but he does, this wafer that is now the actual body of Christ.

And I sometime wonder and think that we have no idea of the power of a moment like that, that holds its control over millions of people. This is a system that controls almost half a billion people on the face of the earth. Between four and five hundred million people are affected by it. Now I don't wonder that we find here in this day when something has happened and the church has gone to meet its Lord, and the darkness of a day that inevitably follows that has already come upon an apostate earth, that we find this powerful thing. Sure. And into her grip, into her hands this apostate church will gather everything. But it will be this in the center of it, you can be quite sure. The thing that can be seen everywhere. And it's getting more and more of a grip upon the peoples of the earth.

Now, the woman and the mystery and the governments, and the beast is already identified in Chapter 13. We're looking at verse eight, the amazement of people whose names are not written. Now in verse nine, the alliance of the nations, the center of this kingdom over which the woman exercises control. It looks as if it's Rome, and remember how I say that. But that's what it looks like, because there are descriptions in there that fit that exactly. The description of it geographically, the description of it topographically, as far as the mountains are concerned, etc. These kingdoms are identified – in verse 13 we have their absolute loyalty to the anti-christ. And in verse 14 what their purpose is – it's war with the lamb, and the lamb is identified, and those who are associated with him.

And so you find, here is the picture in Chapter 17. This rising now before our eyes, it's already been there, but now it is brought before our eyes – this rising of this false religious system that had been a convenience to anti-christ up to now, or he wouldn't have allowed it in the first place. But had been riding him all this through, the representative of these nations in alignment against God. And we find this then is the picture of it in Chapter 17.

Now I'm not going on any further than that this morning because when we come back on Monday we'll just turn the page and go on into Chapter 18. In the meantime, if you have opportunity, and I hope you will, read Chapter 18 between now and Monday.