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The Great Harlot and The Beast, Pt 2
Revelation 17

Keywords: Revelation, End Times, Anti-Christ, Idolatry,, Prophecy, the Beast

PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: In Revelation 17 we witness the description of the spiritual power that has been flowing in and through nations and peoples since sin entered the world. But more importantly we are able to witness the dismantling of this system as well as its dwelling place.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Revelation 17:3, 8-18.
- B. The challenge today is to balance the explanation of the details with a proclamation of the sovereignty of God over all, including Satan and his evil.
- C. Two key characters in this chapter but one main focus.
 1. Harlot and the Beast.
 2. But it is all about God judging the Harlot.
- D. Last message focused on the Harlot and we learned several things:
 1. First, and most important, that this chapter is showing the judgment of the “great harlot” (1).
 2. Second, this harlot is identified as being “Babylon” (5).
 - a. In vs 18 we know that it is speaking of a city.
 - b. But I showed how this should not be seen merely as a city in a specific place and time. It is much more than that.
 - c. We saw that this chapter is emphasizing the spiritual influence she has throughout the ages upon and in the various earthly powers.
 3. Third, in her the fulness of idolatry and its accompanying evils find their source.

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- a. This is what is meant by “harlot.” It is idolatry and spiritual unfaithfulness.
 - b. I made the point that wherever you see broken, twisted living. Where good is called evil and evil is called good. There you find her influence at work.
4. Fourth, we saw that the earthly powers essentially sell their souls to gain even greater power in this age.
- a. She uses that lust for money and power to her purposes so that her influence might flow freely.
 - b. As each human institution and individual is fully corrupted they eventually are destroyed and she moves on to the next and the next.
- E. The greater message in this is that God is tearing down the kingdom of Satan and establishing His kingdom.
1. Matthew 6:9-10.
 2. This is the thrust of the entire New Testament.
 - a. Through Jesus Christ the powers of this age are defeated.
 - b. Right now, God is declaring that victory through His Church as she stands faithful as a testimony to His power.
 - c. In many of the letters of the New Testament there is the reminder of what a citizen of this kingdom is and must be. It is a reminder to be faithful.
 - d. And it all culminates in Revelation where we see ultimately both the earthly reign of Jesus and then the renewing of all things for eternity.
 3. This story is a story of sovereignty.
 - a. There are so many who stumble over what is known as theodicy, the idea of why there is evil but if you simply let the bible’s message from Genesis to Revelation play out it becomes a non-issue.

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- b. God, and God alone, takes evil and uses it as good. He shows in what we would call real life that even that pervasive power Satan uses is unable to stop the sovereign rule of God.
 - c. Over the centuries in countless ways the powers of the spiritual realm and this physical realm has sought their way. And each and every time it ends up working out for the plan of God and for His glory.
- F. Let us now consider the meaning of the beast and how God uses it for His own purposes in the process of destroying the fulness of Satan's power in every way.

II. The Meaning of The Beast.

- A. This beast is both many and one.
 - 1. Many in the sense that it is multiple political powers across time, which we will see in a moment.
 - 2. But it is also one as it is soon to be subsumed into one entity.
 - 3. 13:1 is most likely the introduction to this beast for the book of Revelation. "And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names."
 - a. I recommend you at least reread the notes on that passage to remind yourself of the details.
 - b. Suffice it to say that this is who the Bible calls the Antichrist.
 - c. And in chapter 13 the idea of many and one is still present. Multiple kingdoms but all driven by one power so that by 13:8 the world is now worshiping not an "it" but "he."
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is helpful in this.
 - (1) vss 1-2 the reason for writing.
 - (2) vss 3-4 the clarification.
 - (a) Note the clause: "opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship. . . ."

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- (b) It is speaking of the very events we will see here in Revelation 17.
 - (3) vss 5-6 the reminder.
 - (4) vss 7-12 the fuller explanation.
 - (a) This man of lawlessness is also currently a spirit of lawlessness.
 - (b) But note that will change and be subsumed into one person. And he can't be Satan because he is mentioned separately in vs 9.
 - (c) It is fully tied to the final days of what we are reading in Revelation.
 - (5) This person is the Antichrist.
- B. The beast is under the power and influence of the harlot (3).
- 1. Remember what I taught in the last message. She is sitting upon this beast and this is simply an image of power and submission.
 - 2. But like all things connected to sin, there is hate and envy and division that is present and we will see how the beast ultimately turns on her and destroys her.
- C. He is part of a “mystery” and is described as having seven heads and ten horns (7).
- 1. Mystery is about the Harlot and the Beast, together. Not two separate ones, but one as mentioned last sermon. They are inextricably connected and their fates are tied up with each other.
 - 2. Mystery, as used in the New Testament, is simply something that was hidden by God to all until He chose to reveal it. And that is what you see here, God revealing the mystery in this symbolic imagery and then He explains that symbolism in the following verses. (Again, Revelation is not hard to follow if you let the text simply flow)
- D. The Beast is a false image/imitation of Jesus Christ (8).

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1. “The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction.”
 2. I dealt with this image back in chapter 13 so I recommend you either go back and review those notes or listen to the actual message. In a nutshell, in 13:3 we see this image, “And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast.”
 - a. At some point in the future this person will suffer a what appears to be a death blow and yet will rise.
 - b. What is significant is that it is an event the world will see and as a result the world of humanity will flock to him to worship.
 3. This is what is described again here in our passage. He lives, he dies and he lives again.
 - a. Up to this point the Anti-christ is working in and through various world powers (we will see some of that in a second). Just as the Harlot is working in and through all of the various false religions.
 - b. This makes it hard to discern the individual because he is not yet revealed.
 - c. Satan (according to ch 13 as the “dragon”) uses this key event of resurrection to launch the Anti-christ from the background into a position of worldwide prominence.
- E. The seven heads and ten horns are symbols which John then explains in vs 9-14.
1. Now John redirects his focus away from the beast as that yet future person called the Anti-christ and moves back to the bigger picture of how the beast functions in history.
 2. The seven heads.
 - a. They are first described as seven mountains upon which the woman/harlot sits. This is not a lot of help. But it is important to understand that this is connecting us back to vs 3.

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Remember last message, that the harlot sitting upon the beast speaks of control.

- b. A lot of ideas on what is meant by mountains here. Some see it as seven different Roman emperors because in the next verse they are now called seven kings.
- c. The most popular over the centuries is that it speaks of Rome, which is famous for its seven mountains. This then leads to the idea that the RCC is the harlot and the pope is at the center of all of this.
- d. Best is to see them as kings/kingdoms in history. This fits with Revelation 13 as well as Daniel 7-12 where most of this imagery is pulled from (See also Daniel 2:4-27). [perhaps a brief statement about how prophecy requires work and a broad knowledge of the whole bible]
- e. Vs 10 describes the history of these kings/kingdoms.
 - (1) Five have fallen. These are the major kingdoms that dominated human history and are the focus of much in the bible—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece.
 - (a) All of these have risen and fallen in the time of John’s writing.
 - (b) Again, Daniel is key to this.
 - (2) One is. This is likely referring to Rome, which was the world dominating power at John’s writing.
 - (3) One is yet to come.
 - (a) This gets a bit complex so hold on and I’ll try my best.
 - (b) There is coming a future kingdom, that is easy to see. And it will have a short time of influence (10c).

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- (c) But then in vs 11 there pops up this eighth, who is specifically identified as the beast but also as one of the seven....
- (d) Simply put it is saying that this final form is both a kingdom and a king, the final king of this age.
- (4) Vs 12 focuses on the horns and again it tells us what is meant. They are 10 kings/leaders who have not yet come on the scene.
 - (a) They will be part of the early portion of the final king and his rise to power. Notice that the power they receive is directly from the beast.
 - (b) Their reign is but for a short time (one hour). And in vs 13 we see that they basically work for the Anti-christ.
 - (c) According to vs 14 they will be part of the final war against the Lamb that we will see in chapter 19.
 - (d) Again Daniel 7 deals with this situation as well.
- F. The rebellion against the harlot (14, 16).
 - 1. There is an old saying that there is no honor among thieves. It is true and even more true is that those who love evil shall ultimately turn in on one another.
 - a. How many of us know intimately the hurt of being betrayed by one we trusted? Sadly, how many of us have done the same to others?
 - b. In a fallen world where sin is the dominating power it is wise to always remember this when dealing with others. We do not know the fulness of their plans or plots.
 - 2. I taught you last message how the Harlot used the Beast to gain and extend her influence throughout the ages. Now it is payback.

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- a. In the end there is only room for one power and one religion and it shall be the Anti-christ's.
 - b. And to do this requires that he destroy the false religions that make up the influence and power of the harlot. And in the end, as chapter 13 said, the whole world will come and worship him alone.
3. And we know now that the rule of Satan is unraveling. It is divided and now destroying itself.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Two key observations from this passage to help us settle the dust of all the details and remember the real goal, to find our rest and hope in the true God, our Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- B. First, notice the imagery given in vs 14 of the Lamb.
 1. A little, defenseless lamb who is anything but weak and defenseless.
 2. His opponent is the beast, huge and hideous. Full of power, with kings and kingdoms at his disposal.
 3. And once again we see the idea of the power of God bound up in what man would see as weakness.
 4. Jesus warns us of ravenous wolves who will devour His sheep. Paul warns the Ephesian elders of the same thing. We as the sheep or lambs of God are the target of this constant evil. Peter tells us that Satan is like a ravenous lion who is seeking those he might devour.
 5. But when the beast comes up against the true Lamb. God's Lamb, it is not even a battle. The Lamb is also shown to be the Lion. And He is our true King.
 - a. He has won the day when on the cross He laid His life down for His sheep. He bore their sins away and He took their death upon Himself.
 - b. But then, He shook off these simple fetters and pushed aside the heavy weight of sin and death and rose victorious.

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- c. And here in chapter 17 we are reminded that the Lamb shall overcome the powers of this age.
 - d. Why? Because as vs 14 they may be kings but He is the King of kings. They may be lords but He is the Lord of lords.
 - e. So we are safe for our King fights for us and with us. Notice at the end of vs 14, the Church shall be beside their King and all of the evil done against her shall be avenged.
- C. Second, God is ever and always present in this age.
- 1. Vs 17 is powerful and hope-giving to those who will listen.
 - 2. We watch how so much evil is done in this world both on a micro and macro level.
 - 3. God controls even the hearts of the most evil and the most powerful of this age. We need not fear. They might slay the body, but He slays the soul.
 - 4. But there is one thing that is certain, the Word of God. At the very end of vs 17 we see that God will not allow His Word, His promises, His purposes to be thwarted.
 - a. Ever.
 - b. Not a single tiny jot or tittle as Jesus said, shall fail.
 - c. But we can be certain that the will and wishes of this age shall all fail and fall away. For they cannot stand against His will for, in fact, they run parallel to God's plan.
- D. So to you who love the name of Jesus, find rest here. I do not know all your struggles or fears but I know they are nothing when compared to the faithfulness of your true King.
- E. And to you who find this all to be a bit of a bother or an intrusion into your personal pursuits and desires. Remember these words and heed them.
- 1. There are only two paths and two ends.
 - 2. One path is with Jesus and only Jesus as your Lord and King. It is hard and narrow and foolish-looking. But it ends in life eternal.

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3. The other is easy, and broad and with the majority of people. It is filled with amusements and pleasures that promise the world but never deliver. And it ends in the wrath of God and destruction.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- How does vs 17 help us view current news events and difficulties in our lives? How does it help us interpret the persecution of the church throughout the ages?
- What are ways you need to rethink how you see this current age?
- What are ways you need to rethink how you parent your children and run your households when thinking through the implications of this chapter? There should be many so don't abandon this question to quickly.