

The Unfolding Final World Power

Revelation 17:7-18

I. Introduction: A Challenging Passage

1. As we come into today's passage, I want to note the challenge the honest expositor faces in properly interpreting what is presented in these verses. Fortunately, while there is some uncertainty regarding elements of the passage, none stand in the way of the central point's being revealed to John, and therein, us as well.
2. The opening verses of Chapter 13 are an excellent backdrop for our passage today. There we see a reference to the beast of the sea or the Antichrist including 7 heads, 10 horns, the source of his power being the dragon (or Satan), and his overcoming a seemingly mortal wound.
3. As we travel through these and the coming verses, I believe the focus is on both the players of the unholy trinity and the apostate church along with historical kingdoms/empires as they influence all of history up to the time of Christ's return.

II. Revelation 17:7-11: The Final World Power

1. First up, we note the mystery of the woman and the beast are actually one mystery...so to know one is to know the other. As we discussed in our last two teachings here in Revelation 17, the world system headed by Satan, was, is, and will be at war with Christ until the day of its final defeat.
2. A reminder is in order here. Specifically, that we traced the beginnings of the Babylonian empire (both political and religious) to Noah's great-grandson Nimrod who ushered in the first world-wide, fully integrated political, economic, philosophical, and religious system – a system that hated God and looks much like the system the Dragon, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet will usher in during the Great Tribulation.

- A. With this reminder, we also note that the woman is not a nation, kingdom, empire, or specific person. [Instead, she is the religious system founded at Babylon and influences, leads, and inspires the kings and kingdoms of the world \(heads & horns\) all the while gaining her influence from Satan via the beast.](#) Some have said the religious system is the Catholic church and while I think the Catholic church may well be part of the system warring against Christ, it does a great violence to Scripture in suggesting the church more broadly is not in view.
3. The beast in v8 ([also referenced in v11 here](#) as well as 9:11; 11:7, and 13:3) has engendered much speculation ranging from identifying him as perhaps Judas Iscariot, Nero, or some other nefarious world leader. [Of course, it is appointed for man to die only once and there is scant Biblical support for supposing this is an historical individual come back to life to rule again.](#)

Others have presented the beast as a revived Roman empire and this may well be the case. [Yet, this too has its problems as the Roman empire has continued in one form or another since John's day and has not, therefore, fit the term of "is not".](#) While never fully ceasing, the Babylonian empire seemingly fits both the historical pattern and the prophesied future described in Scripture.

- A. No matter where you come down in this area, the major thrust in view is the beast is the product of and aligns with the one giving all the marching orders – Satan.
- B. One final important note here in v8 is that believers – those written in the Book of Life – will NOT marvel at the beast as will the non-believers, for they will NOT be fooled.
4. As we move into vs 9-11, we again face an almost endless number of interpretive possibilities...[beginning with the words that only those applying wisdom will understand just what is being presented.](#) This is a great warning which echoes throughout Scripture...[we must have God's wisdom for the wisdom of the](#)

enemy is endlessly proven to be greater than man wisdom. He seeks to destroy us and the only protection we have (or need) is faith in Jesus opening the doors to His wisdom.

A. Many see the 7 heads and 7 mountains as referring to Rome, long known as “the city of 7 hills”. Of course, Rome has more than 7 hills and the Catholic church goes far beyond this area. Furthermore, why use the word for mountains (oros) when the word for hills is readily available?!

B. Scripture (**Is 2:2; Jer 51:2; Daniel 2**, and others) often uses mountains to present kingdoms and this idea is further supported by John's words in v10 referring to there also being 7 kings to go along with the 7 kingdoms. And in v15 with the waters being “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues,” a clear reference to groups of people or kingdoms.

5. Next in this complicated passage, we see that there are eight kings/kingdoms in view. John says 5 are no more (fallen), 1 is, and 1 (now at 7 total) has not yet come with the 8th (v11) being the final expression of the 7th.

While not foundational to our faith, some have looked to the image in Daniel 2 for a good explanation of just which kingdoms are in view. Others have sought to identify those kingdoms warring against God that had great worldly influence while also being legitimate heirs of both political and religious Babel that WARRED against Israel. These two approaches suggest that the 5 kingdoms from the past John is speaking of include Egypt, Nineveh/Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Rome would have been the kingdom that “is” in John's day.

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6. This would leave us with identifying just the 7th and 8th kingdoms that had not AND still have not come. As I noted previously, I suspect the 7th kingdom will be the one arising out of the miraculous defeat of Gog and Magog in Israel, likely just before the seven year tribulation period AND representing a revived

Roman empire. The 8th would be birthed from the 7th and led by the Antichrist.

A. I note that some suggest for the 1,000 post-Roman empire years, a ruthless Islamic empire arose and that this was the 7th kingdom with the 8th kingdom also being Islamic. **In the end, we just don't know.** While certainly possible, I do NOT favor this view as v10 tells us that when the 7th kingdom comes it will be for a short period of time and this would rule out the long-standing Islamic empire.

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III. **Revelation 17:12-18: A Kingdom Divided Against Itself**

1. Next up, we have the 10 horns or kings or kingdoms. **In a power vacuum, a confederation of 10 kings will give themselves and their kingdoms to the beast of kingdom #8, the Antichrist.**
2. In addition to Revelation 13 offering some insights to what we read here, in **Daniel 7:23-24** we read a similar prophesy. **In this prophesy, there are also 10 kings, with 7 of the 10 standing with the Antichrist and 3 being destroyed.**
3. In v14 we note that at Christ's victorious 2nd coming the church is already with Him, as it is in her we find the saints that are "called, chosen, and faithful."
4. In verses 16-17, John witnesses a civil war. **In particular, the 10 transitional kingdoms fully used the prostitute OR religious system and, just as has happened repeatedly throughout history, since she is no longer of any use, they hate and war against her.** Some point to this being at the beginning of the tribulation period, but I think it makes more sense near the midpoint with the Antichrist being primarily politically driven and the False Prophet being primarily religiously driven.
5. V17 offers another picture of God's sovereignty as all that John witnessed was the fulfillment of God's will. **God uses the 10 (of likely just 7 as we read in Daniel) kingdoms as His tool of righteous**

judgment on the harlot who used faith as rallying cry, all the while being unfaithful in their idolatry of the beast.

6. v18 is another one of those verses that engenders lots of disagreement. Is the great city Babylon, Rome, Jerusalem, Mecca, or, as some have suggest, New York. Some say the city represents a spiritual verses literal city or a literal city with a clear connection to spiritual Babylon. In the end, we don't really know.

What we do know is that the great city here in Revelation 17-19 is representative of the power of the apostate religious system and the political system founded by Nimrod and then brought forward to John's time by the name of Rome.

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IV. Closing: Be sober and Vigilant in Knowing & Living Out God's Wisdom

1. As we close, I think it helpful, in light of the broad strokes in our passage today, to consider where we stand.
 - A. Satan is evil and has, is, and will command an evil army;
 - B. Jesus is victorious and those that are with Him, the "called, chosen, and faithful" will share in His victory; and
 - C. In what requires daily attention and as we are told in **1 Peter 5:8**, we are to be sober and vigilant in knowing/living out God's wisdom rather than being destroyed by the enemy just as we see indicated in verses 8-9 in our study today.

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Discussion Prompts

Don't be shy or embarrassed, this is a safe place to talk, learn, and grow. All of us should walk with an attitude of grace and Godly love in encouraging one another to contribute to our shared growth in the Lord.

For more discussion questions helping your faith to grow, please download the sermon documents typically posted the day after each sermon on the watch tab of our App or website.

1. Using your notes and memory, as a group list the most important takeaways you heard in today's teaching.
2. Discuss why it is or it is not important to know which city and which kings/kingdoms John is referring to. What kind of a problem does not knowing create for you personally or for you to talk with others about the book of Revelation (a book which intimidates so many)?
3. Why has much of what claims to be the church been such a willing partner with Satan throughout every generation, including what John both prophesies and witnesses here in the tribulation period? Being careful to not cast dispersions on God's church, what is our duty with respect to the apostate church in our age?

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The Unfolding Final World Power

I. Introduction: A Challenging Passage

- Read Revelation 13 along with Daniel 2 and 7:23-24

I. Revelation 17:7-11: The Final World Power

- God has revealed all that we need know to have faith in Him as our Lord and Savior. So, while it is good to seek answers, be reminded to emphasize the main points being presented.
- Living in the wisdom of God is a great warning echoing throughout Scripture

Additional Scripture References: Rev 9:11, 11:7, 13:3; Is 2:2; Jer 51:2; Da 2

II. Revelation 17:12-18: A Kingdom Divided Against Itself

- Here, the world system gets fully on board with the Antichrist and the yoke of the religious system is thrown off.
- God is sovereign and uses all things, even the things of Satan, in fulfilling His will.

Additional Scripture References: Da 7:23-24

III. Closing: Be sober and Vigilant in Knowing & Living Out God's Wisdom

- Are you a Christian? If so, it is you that Jesus is referring to in Rev 17:14 for you are "called, chosen, and faithful".

Additional Scripture References: 1 Pe 5:8

5-Day Devotional

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Day 1: The Ancient Conflict

Reading: Rev 17:1-8, Gen 11:1-9

Devotional: From Babel to Babylon, humanity has repeatedly organized itself against God. The tower of Babel represented humanity's first unified rebellion, establishing patterns of pride and self-worship that echo through history. Today, the same spiritual forces wage war against Christ and His church. Yet Scripture assures us that those written in the Book of Life will not be deceived. This ancient conflict reminds us that neutrality is impossible. Every day, we choose whom we will serve. The world's systems promise security, pleasure, and power, but they ultimately lead to destruction. Take comfort: God has already written the final chapter, and His people share in Christ's victory. Where are you tempted to compromise with worldly systems today?

Day 2: Wisdom That Protects

Reading: Rev 17:9-11, Ja 1:5-8, Pro 2:1-11

Devotional: "This calls for a mind with wisdom," John writes. Human intelligence cannot discern spiritual realities; we desperately need divine wisdom. The enemy's schemes are more cunning than our natural understanding can grasp. Throughout history, countless believers have been deceived not because they lacked education, but because they relied on worldly wisdom rather than God's truth. James promises that God gives wisdom generously to all who ask. This wisdom protects us from marveling at the beast, from being seduced by false religion, and from compromising our faith. It illuminates the path when darkness surrounds us. Today, humbly acknowledge your need for God's wisdom. Ask Him to open your eyes to spiritual realities and guard your heart against deception.

Day 3: Called, Chosen, and Faithful

Reading: Rev 17:12-14, 1 Pet 2:9-12, Rom 8:28-29

Devotional: Three words define the victorious church: called, chosen, and faithful. You did not choose God; He called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. He chose you before the foundation of the world, writing your name in the Lamb's Book of Life. Now He invites you to remain faithful. The ten kings may align with the beast, wielding earthly power and authority, but they cannot overcome the Lamb. When Christ returns, His saints accompany Him in triumph. This is not arrogance but assurance rooted in God's unchanging character and promises. Your circumstances may feel overwhelming, but remember: you belong to the winning side. Faithfulness today, in small decisions and quiet moments, prepares you for that glorious day. What does faithfulness look like in your current season?

Day 4: God's Sovereignty in Chaos Reading: Rev 17:15-17, Dan 4:34-37, Rom 9:14-24

Devotional: Even rebellion serves God's purposes. The ten kings hate the prostitute and destroy her, yet verse 17 reveals this stunning truth: "God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose." This does not make God the author of evil, but it demonstrates His absolute sovereignty over human history. The same empires that persecute believers unknowingly fulfill divine plans. When life feels chaotic, when evil seems triumphant, when injustice goes unpunished, remember: God remains on His throne. He works all things together for His glory and His people's good. This truth does not eliminate mystery or pain, but it anchors our souls in turbulent times. You can rest today knowing that nothing catches God by surprise. His purposes will prevail.

Day 5: Sober, Vigilant, Victorious Reading: 1 Pet 5:6-11, Eph 6:10-18, Rev 21:1-7

Devotional: Peter's warning echoes through Revelation: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." The spiritual battle is real, the stakes eternal. Yet vigilance is not paranoia; it is clear-eyed awareness combined with confident faith. We watch and pray, putting on the full armor of God, while remembering that Christ has already defeated our enemy. The beast may rage, but his time is short. Soon, every tear will be wiped away, death will be no more, and God will dwell with His people forever. Until that day, stand firm. Resist the devil. Encourage fellow believers. Live as one who knows the ending. Your daily choices matter eternally. Walk worthy of your calling today.

Small Group Study Guide

Revelation 17:7-18

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Opening Prayer: Pray for the Lord to lead you in your discussion and to open your eyes to understand what He has revealed through His word.

Opening Question: When you hear about "mysteries" in the Bible, what emotions or thoughts come to mind? Excitement? Confusion? Curiosity?

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. **The woman and the beast are one mystery** - The religious and political systems opposing God are interconnected and have been since Babylon.
2. **Believers will not be deceived** - Those whose names are written in the Book of Life will not marvel at the beast (v8).
3. **God remains sovereign** - Even in judgment and chaos, God's will is being fulfilled (v17).
4. **Victory belongs to Christ** - The "called, chosen, and faithful" will share in Christ's ultimate triumph (v14).

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. Why do you think John describes both the woman and the beast as "one mystery"? What does their relationship tell us about how evil operates in our world?
2. The sermon traces the Babylonian system back to Nimrod. How does understanding this historical context help us interpret current world events?
3. What does it mean that believers "will NOT marvel at the beast" (v8)? How can we cultivate discernment in a world that often celebrates what opposes God?
4. The passage describes kingdoms that "were, are, and are to come." How does this prophetic timeline encourage or challenge your faith today?

5. Verses 16-17 describe a civil war where the ten kings turn against the religious system they once used. What does this teach us about the self-destructive nature of evil?
6. The sermon emphasizes that only God's wisdom—not human wisdom—can help us understand these mysteries. Where in your life do you need to trade human wisdom for God's wisdom?
7. First Peter 5:8 calls us to be "sober and vigilant." What does spiritual vigilance look like in your daily life? Where might you be vulnerable to the enemy's schemes?
8. The sermon notes that believers are "called, chosen, and faithful" (v14). How does knowing you are called and chosen by God affect how you live each day?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. **Wisdom Check:** Each day, identify one decision or situation where you're tempted to rely on worldly wisdom. Pause and ask: "What does God's Word say about this?" Journal about the difference between human and divine wisdom in that situation.
2. **Vigilance Practice:** Set three daily reminders on your phone with the words "Be sober and vigilant." When the reminder goes off, take 2 minutes to pray and assess: Where might I be vulnerable to deception right now? Share your observations with an accountability partner.
3. **Meditation on Victory:** Spend 10 minutes each day meditating on Revelation 17:14: "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them." Write down areas of your life where you need to remember Christ's ultimate victory. Thank God that His victory is already secured.
4. **Group Activity:** As a group, create two columns on a whiteboard or large paper:

Column 1: "The World's System" List characteristics, values, and tactics of the Babylonian system we see in culture today

Column 2: "Christ's Kingdom" List the contrasting characteristics, values, and ways of Christ's kingdom

Discuss: Where do you see these two kingdoms colliding in your workplace, family, or community? How can you be a faithful witness in those spaces?

Read together:

1 Peter 5:8-10 *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."*

Final Question: What is one specific way you will choose to stand firm in faith this week, knowing that Christ has already won the victory?

Closing Prayer: Share prayer requests related to areas where group members need God's wisdom and vigilance. Pray for discernment to recognize deception. Thank God for the assured victory in Christ. Ask for strength to remain faithful until His return

Discussion Questions

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1. How does understanding the Babylonian empire's origins with Nimrod help us recognize modern systems that integrate politics, economics, and religion while opposing God?
2. In what ways might believers today be tempted to 'marvel at the beast' like unbelievers, and how does being written in the Book of Life protect us from deception?
3. Why do you think God uses the language of mountains and kingdoms rather than individual rulers when describing the forces arrayed against Him throughout history?
4. How does the civil war between the ten kings and the religious system they once supported reflect patterns we see in worldly power structures today?
5. What does it mean practically to apply God's wisdom rather than human wisdom when discerning spiritual deception in our current age?
6. How should the reality that we are 'called, chosen, and faithful' shape our daily decisions and our confidence in Christ's ultimate victory?
7. Why is it significant that the church is already with Christ at His second coming, and what does this reveal about our identity and security?
8. In what ways does the prostitute or false religious system continue to influence kingdoms and leaders today, even within Christianity?
9. How does God's sovereignty over even evil kingdoms and their destructive actions challenge or comfort you in light of current world events?
10. What does it mean to be 'sober and vigilant' in spiritual warfare, and how can we cultivate this posture in our daily walk with Christ?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Revelation 17:7-18

The Unfolding Final World Power

1. Mystery in Scripture

The sermon mentions the mystery of the woman and the beast. Why do you think mysteries are included in the Bible, and how do they influence our faith and understanding?

2. Historical Kingdoms and Influence

The sermon discusses various historical kingdoms and their influence. How do you think the actions and philosophies of past empires affect our world or personal lives today?

3. Religious Systems and Influence

It was suggested that the woman represents religious systems influencing world powers. In our world today, how do you think religion influences political or social structures, and how should we respond as a family?

4. God's Sovereignty and Human Action

The sermon emphasizes God's sovereignty even amid chaos and human governance. How can we reconcile challenges we face daily with the belief that God is in control?

5. Personal Faith and Vigilance

Reflecting on the call to be "sober and vigilant," how can we, as individuals and as a family, practice being vigilant in our faith against modern-day distractions and challenges?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Revelation 17:7-18

The Unfolding Final World Power

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

Understanding Influences: Children at this age can learn about the difference between good and bad influences, much like how the sermon describes different influences in the world.

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of a time when someone asked you to do something you didn't feel right about? How did it make you feel, and what did you do?
2. Who are some people in your life that help you do the right thing? How can we stay close to good influences?
3. When playing games or watching shows, how do you decide what's good for you and what might not be?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

Choosing the Right Path: This age group can explore how to make wise choices and recognize potentially harmful influences in their social circles, similar to identifying the kingdoms and powers discussed in the sermon.

Discussion Question:

1. Have you ever had to make a tough decision about who to spend time with or what activities to join? How did you choose the right path?
2. How do you recognize when something or someone isn't influencing you positively, whether at school or online?
3. What are some ways we can practice wisdom when deciding what's right for us, both in friendships and in activities?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

Truth, Falsehood, and Peer Pressure: Pre-teens and early teens can delve deeper into navigating peer pressure and learning to discern truth from falsehood, especially in digital spaces.

Discussion Question:

1. Social media often presents us with choices of what to believe or whom to follow. How do you discern what aligns with your values and faith?
2. What strategies can you use to stand firm in your faith when faced with peer pressure?
3. How can you be a positive influence for Jesus in your friend groups and online communities, encouraging others towards truth and good choices?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

Revelation 17:7-18

The Unfolding Final World Power

1. Upholding Truth in Social Circles

Relevant Bible Verse: Ephesians 4:15 – "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

Application: Encourage conversations that focus on honesty and kindness. When discrepancies or rumors arise, steer the conversation back to truth while showing respect and love to everyone involved.

Scenario: When participating in a group chat or discussion, it can be tempting to go along with the crowd, even if the truth is compromised.

Discussion Question: How can you courageously but kindly express your ideas when others might disagree, ensuring that truth and integrity are at the center of your group interactions?

2. Building Meaningful Relationships

Relevant Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 15:33 – "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"

Application: Seek friends who uplift your spirit and help you grow in character and faith. Be vigilant of those whose actions consistently lead you away from your values.

Scenario: In friendships and relationships, it's crucial to discern influences and choose companions who encourage positive growth.

Discussion Question: How can you evaluate the influence your friends and relationships have on you, ensuring they align with your values and faith in Jesus?

3. Discernment Online

Relevant Bible Verse: Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

Application: Use Scripture as your guide to filter what you consume online. Whether it's content on social media, videos, or discussions, measure them against biblical truths to discern their alignment with your faith.

Scenario: The digital world is vast and can often present conflicting information and values, making it a challenge to navigate truthfully and faithfully.

Discussion Question: What are some practical strategies you can use to ensure the time you spend online is both glorifying to God and enriching to your faith? How can Scripture help guide in that direction?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.