

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

Revelation 17 —BABYLON AND THE BEAST | 10.6.22

I. INTRODUCTION (Revelation 17:1-18)

- A. Babylon appears in a total of 16 books in the Bible. Twelve times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament. The longest prophecy in the Old Testament is about Babylon, in **Jeremiah 50-51**, and the longest prophecy in the New Testament is also about Babylon, appearing in **Revelation 17-18**.
- B. Here in **Revelation 17-18** we are looking at the end of Babylon, but her origin begins in Genesis, with Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, Noah's son who received the curse for exposing his nakedness (**Gen. 10:7-10**). But in **Genesis 11** we get the first glimpse of a people who are unified in their rebellion against God (**Gen. 11:4,8-9**).
- C. Boiled down, *Babylon is a rebellious, antichristian civilization that's unbowed and unrepentant throughout both the past, in our present day, and in the future, even when God's judgements/wrath are being poured out on her full strength.*
- D. Babylon in the future, as the Bible presents it in prophecy (**Revelation 17-18**) will be a global religious and economic system which is a part of the beast regime. The beast will be the political head, and Babylon will be the religious, and economic engine fueling this political, global beast empire.
- E. There are two primary schools of thought about Babylon's future. The first school assumes that Babylon will literally be rebuilt in the same historical location, which is in modern day Iraq, around 50 miles south of Bagdad along the bank of the Great River Euphrates.
 - 1. The second school of thought says that Babylon will be a renewed economic and religious culture/system that will fill/dominate the earth, but not rebuilt in her historical location.
- F. While I'm not 100% certain on its future physical location, I am persuaded that it's a global, dominating religious and economic system that will negatively, wickedly touch every corner of the earth.
 - 1. Regarding its physical location, Israel is a great signpost for the fact that they have regathered, in their physical, geographical location, reinstating their original language, their culture, and religion. Because this has never happened in history, most Bible commentators wrote off a restored, future, Jewish people living in their homeland until 1948 (*The "Church" replaced Israel*).
- G. Babylon has 8 primary qualities;
 - 1. She is the originator and progenitor of false religion, in the future, and throughout world history (**Rev. 17:5**).
 - 2. She is enthroned upon the nations (**Rev. 17:15**).
 - 3. She is the center of global commerce (**Rev. 18:3b**).
 - 4. She is the ultimate symbol of human rebellion against God (**Rev. 18:7**).
 - 5. She intoxicates the nations (**Rev. 17:2b**).
 - 6. She's obsessed with persecuting God's saints (**Rev. 17:6**).
 - 7. She is empowered by and paves the way for the antichrist (**Rev. 17:1-5**).
 - 8. She is destined for a swift, devastating, and complete fall (**Rev. 18:10**).
- H. In the opening verses of **Revelation 17:1-3** we learn about the great harlot, the beast who carries her and the kings of the earth. Then in **Revelation 17:4-6** we learn about the harlot's luxury and depravity. In **Revelation 17:7-14** we get a fuller explanation of the beast, and finally in **Revelation 17:15-18** we learn of Babylon's fall.

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GREAT HARLOT (Revelation 17:1-3)

1. **Revelation 17:1-2** *“Then one 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, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”*
- B. In **Revelation 16** we saw the crushing, devastating, final 7 judgments of God poured out on the beast, and his kingdom, but now we are learning about **WHY** God’s judgments were so severe.
 1. **One Of The Seven Angels Who Had The Seven Bowls Came And Talked To Me**—This seventh angel is appearing again to connect the last bowl judgments with what follows in **Revelation 17-19**. In **Revelation 16:17-21** the great city of Babylon was split into three parts.
 2. **I Will Show You The Judgement Of The Great Harlot Who Sits On Many Waters**—Babylon’s greatness is twofold—Firstly, it’s because of her reach and size, and secondly, she’s great because of her corruption.
 - a. She’s not just a harlot, but the “great harlot”. Though we’ve seen glimpses of this culture, and it’s emerging now, where it goes will take the globe by great surprise.
 3. **The Kings Of The Earth Have Committed Fornication With Her, And The Inhabitants Of The Earth Were Made Drunk With The Wine Of Her Fornication**—The kings of the earth, the heads of nations have committed fornication with her, meaning they entered into commerce with her to share in her wealth and pomp.
 - a. And it’s true, as goes the kings, so goes the nations, which explains why the inhabitants were also made drunk with her fornication. The fornication is that the harlot is calling the world, starting with the kings, to worship the beast.
 4. **Revelation 17:3** *“So he (the angel) 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.”*
- C. Throughout John’s experience in the Revelation, he continues to use this phrase, **“I was in the Spirit (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10)”** to convey the fact that was experience wasn’t related to the middle eastern cuisine John had the night before. He’s telling us, I was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, experiencing things I could never do on my own.
 1. **And I Saw A Women Sitting On A Scarlet Beast Which Was Full Of Blasphemy, Having Seven Heads And Ten Horns**—The women is Babylon, the great harlot, and the beast is the antichrist. This is why John makes sure we are connecting the beast to the dragon in **Revelation 12:3**, and the beast from **Revelation 13:1**.
 - a. What we learn is that there is a temporary, symbiotic relationship between the antichrist and the harlot Babylon. The beast is going to use the harlot to create a worldwide religious and economic movement, that will pull people in, making the step easier for the nations to worship the beast.

III. THE HARLOT’S LUXURY AND IMMORALITY (Revelation 17:4-6)

1. **Revelation 17:4-5** *“The women 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. And on her forehead a name was written; MYSTERY BABYLON, THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”*
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- B. The allure from the harlot will be working to draw many away from Christ, and His Church. This will be a pull for life in this age, to lock things down here, to live in the flash, the pomp, and the bright lights that earth has to offer, while at the same time losing right of the diamond-like glory of the eternal city which is yet to come (**Rev. 21:9-21**).
1. The Women Was Arrayed In Purple And Scarlet, And Adorned With Gold And Precious Stones And Pearls—Purple in John’s day was only worn by the wealthy because of the cost to get the dyes (**Acts 16:14**). These pearls, gold, and precious stones are a counterfeit to what Paul said we were to build our lives upon (**1st Cor. 3:9-17**).
 - a. Beloved, this is why we have to get free from life in this age, because the seduction of what’s ahead is beyond comprehension.
 2. Having In Her Hand A Golden Cup Full Of Abominations And The Filthiness Of Her Fornication—Though this cup looks costly, and noble from the outside, the reality is, it’s filled with demons.
 - a. The days of deception ahead are going to be un-paralleled in human history (**Matt. 24:21**). This harlot religion will be served to the nations from a cup that looks appealing, but it’s filled abominations. The Church will have to be able to separate what looks good, from what’s evil (**Gen. 27:22; Rev. 13:11**).
 3. On Her Forehead A Name Was Written: MYSTERY BABYLON, THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF ALL HARLOTS AND OF ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH—Here we learn, that all the previous Babylon’s had their inception in her, the mother, the progenitor, the origin of all these evil, unrepentant civilizations throughout world history.
 - a. Just like John said, “*...and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come...*” (**1st Jn. 2:18**) so also have many such babylon’s come, but Babylon the Great, the Mother is still yet coming; *and here she is*.
 - b. Historically names represent identity, future, and the prophetic path that God has called a person to walk in. Her name, a brazen name, an unashamed name, a name that doesn’t blush at immorality (**Jer. 3:3**) is written on her forehead.
 - c. The name on the forehead is found four times for the followers of the beast (**Rev. 13:16; 14:9; 17:5; 20:4**), and five times for the followers of Jesus (**Rev. 3:12; 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4**). It’s a battle of worship, and allegiance.
- C. **Revelation 17:6** *“I saw the women, 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. I Saw The Women, Drunk With The Blood Of The Saints, And With The Martyrs Of Jesus—The idea of being drunk with blood is an ancient idiom for the sword to be overtaken in the death of many, it’s blood-lust.
 - a. Some translations use the word WITNESS, but WITNESS and MARTYR are synonymous, meaning that the root word of WITNESS is MARTYR. During the time of the early Church, to be a witness for Jesus meant to be a martyr (**Acts 1:7-8; Rev. 1:5; 2:13**).
 - b. But how powerful is it, that throughout the whole of the Revelation we don’t see the Church hiding, running, cowering, or looking to get away from the trouble. In The Revelation the Church is pictured as victorious, faith-filled, fueled by hope and confident in love. God will get us there, even if we aren’t there today!
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2. And When I Saw Her, I Marveled With Great Amazement—Originally, John was told, “...*Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot...*”(Rev. 17:1)”, but so far all John has seen is her size, the reach of her influence, and the flowing blood from the martyrs of Jesus.
 - a. As John looks at the harlot, he’s struck by her earthly splendor, her natural glory, as she’s moving powerfully throughout the earth dominating kings and the inhabitants of the earth.
 - b. I think he’s also marveling/reeling from the symbiotic relationship between the beast and the harlot. And rightly so. The two great opponents of the Church and the human race are the culmination of all historical antichrist-like spirits, and the culmination of every ungodly, unrepentant wicked civilization; the beast, and Babylon.

IV. THE BEAST AND HIS EMPIRE (Revelation 17:7-14)

1. **Revelation 17:7** “But the angel said to me, why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the women and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.”
- B. Well, thank God that we aren’t left to our own devices to try and figure out what the Bible means. Right here, in God’s gracious heart gives both John and us the interpretation to what he was looking at.
 1. But The Angel Said To Me, Why Did You Marvel? I Will Tell You The Mystery Of The Women And Of The Beast Who Carries Her, Who Has Seven Heads And Ten Horns—It’s as if the angel is saying to John, “*John, why is this perplexing you? Why are you not understanding this? You saw both her judgement and the beast’s back in Revelation 13, you saw that they were destined to fall, suddenly. It’s all temporary.*”
 - a. The reason why the angel keeps connecting the beast with the seven heads, and ten horns is so that both John and his readers don’t get confused about who God’s talking about (Rev. 12:3; 13:1).
 - b. These seven heads here are referring to seven vast empires throughout history that have persecuted Israel. They are Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, ancient Rome, and a still future revived Roman Empire (Dan. 2:41-42; 7-7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 17:3-16).
 - c. Beloved, at the end of this age, the two great opponents of the Church and the human race is the culmination of all historical antichrist-like spirits, and the culmination of every ungodly, unrepentant, wicked civilization.
- C. **Revelation 17:8** “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not and yet is.”
 1. The Beast That You Saw Was, And Is Not, And Will Ascend Out Of The Bottomless Pit And Go To Perdition—This another parody on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Twice in this chapter the angel emphasizes that the beast is headed to perdition (Rev. 17:8, 11) (*a state of eternal punishment*).
 - a. The Beast That Was—Historically, the earth has suffered under an antichrist-like spirit. So when the Antichrist comes, it won’t be something new, just a massive increase of what’s always been around.
 - b. The Beast That Is Not—This is referring to the antichrist’s future death. Though he was, there will be a moment when he won’t be (Rev. 13:3,12, 14).
 - c. The Beast That Is—This is a nod to the antichrist’s resurrection/ resuscitation. His disappearance/death won’t be final, but temporary.

2. And Those Who Dwell On The Earth Will Marvel, Whose Names Are Not Written In The Book Of Life From The Foundation Of The World—Here, much of the earth is marveling, but it's in the form of worship, as great deception has filled their hearts and lives. It's not that the Church is worshiping the beast, but that many who are outside of Christ are being deceived.

D. **Revelation 17:9-13** *“Here is the mind which has wisdom; the seven heads are seven mountains on which the women sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is one of the seven, and is going to perdition. ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful”*

1. Here Is The Mind That Has Wisdom—The idea is that much wisdom is needed to make sense of what's happening, just like we were instructed back in **Revelation 13:18**.
2. The Seven Heads Are Seven Mountains On Which The Women Sits—Throughout the Bible a mountain or a hill is often used to speak of a place of power or rulership (**Dan. 2:35; Jer. 51:25; Isaiah 2:2; Isaiah 41:51; Ps. 68:15-16; Hab. 3:6**). These seven mountains are seven nations, or seven kings of seven nations that the harlot will sit upon (*You can't separate a kingdom from a king*).
 - a. Beyond just trying to identify who these kings/kingdoms are, we are to see that she has significant influence, and reach, even over heads of kingdoms.
3. The Ten Horns Which You Saw Are Ten Kingdoms Who Have Received No Kingdom As Yet, But They Receive Authority For One Hour As Kings With The Beast—“(These ten horns) speak of a future ten-nation confederation of ten kings who will each enthusiastically come under the antichrists authority (**Dan. 2:39-42; 7:7,20,24; 11:36-45; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,7,12,16**).”—Mike Bickle, *The Revelation*, Pg. 72, 131
 - a. It's not that they only have prominence for one literal hour, but that it's short lived.
4. These Will Make War With The Lamb And The Lamb Will Overcome Them, For He Is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings—It's here that we learn about the purpose of the merged assets; to fight God.
 - a. They aren't unified to impact more culture, or to get more money, or to occupy more land, or even to take over more people. No, they are all unified against God, expressly, the Lamb of God.
 - b. This is the nature of everything that's fueling this movement, both historically, in our present day, and in the future. It's a drive to fight against Christ and His coming Kingdom.
 - c. Babylon is a pawn-queen in the antichrist's hand, but she will be a forceful one that's stripped the nations of their historical roots, leaving them subject to the beast.
 - d. But remember, John saw a Lamb standing, though He had been slain, but John didn't see a weak, decrepit, aged, and beggarly Lamb. John saw a Lamb with seven horns, and seven eyes, with the fullness of power, and the fullness of wisdom (**Rev. 5:6**).
 - e. It's the Lamb, not the antichrist, not the 10 kings, not the false prophet who is Lord of Lord and King of Kings! He's the King over the other 10 kings. This is why He wins, this is why He overcomes them.

V. BABYLON'S FALL (Revelation 17:15-18)

1. **Revelation 17:15** *"Then he said to me, the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues."*

B. Well, for the first time, the angel now returns to his original invitation to John to show him the judgment of the Great Harlot. Previously, not only did he not see the Harlots judgment, but he also didn't see much of the harlot, he mainly seen the beast. But here is where the vision turns back to the judgement of the great harlot.

1. The Waters Which You Saw, Where The Harlot Sits, Are Peoples, Multitudes, Nations And Tongues—The idea is clear, this harlot system, this economic and religious culture has touched the ends of the earth. We shouldn't lessen the blow that this verse is intended to have on us.

C. **Revelation 17:16-17** *"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. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled."*

1. 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—Friends, this is what evil does, it consumes itself, it implodes, it falls on itself. Evil always turns on itself.

a. Babylon always falls, because it's built on a faulty foundation, a foundation that can't stand the Day of God!

1. They Will Strip Her Naked—This was part of the warning that Jesus gave to the Church of Laodicea in **Revelation 3:14-22**. Jesus also warned those that follow Him to stay awake, so that they also don't lose their white garments. This has to do with the exposing of sin, the public ridicule and exposure externally of what's happening internally.

2. They Will Eat Her Flesh—The image of flesh devoured has a story in the dogs eating Jezebel in **2nd Kings 9:36-37**, which was also assured to the Church of Thyatira if they didn't turn. He who has feet like brass is ready to step into her life (**Rev. 2:18-29**). But it also looks ahead to the birds of the air that will be coming in the forthcoming chapter to eat their flesh (**Rev. 19:17-21**).

3. They Will Burn Her With Fire—The irony here is that a priests daughter who became a prostitute was to be burned in the fire (**Lev. 21:9**). This speaks of the fire that always come with victory, but also the lake of fire that awaits her (**Rev. 20:10**).

i. Babylon is a priestess, she's a harlot religion, she's a temple prostitute, she's a progenitor of what is evil, unholy, unclean, and is serving it up to the masses. Thus, God will also burn her in the fire.

2. For God Has Put It Into Their Hearts To Fulfill His Purpose, Until The Words Of God Are Fulfilled—As crazy as it seems, as dark as it gets, we have to remember that God is the One who's leading human history.

a. This is why John got **Revelation 4**, and **Revelation 5** before he got **Revelation 6-19**. This is why John seen the Father seated on His throne, high above every other in **Revelation 4**. And this is why John seen the glory and worth of the Son in **Revelation 5**, the only qualified One to take over the leadership of the nations.

D. **Revelation 17:18** *“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”*

1. And The Women Whom You Saw Is That Great city Which Reigns Over the Kings Of The Earth—Here it is, the great city, we are finally told expressly what or who it is; it’s Babylon.
 - a. Some people confuse this term the “Great City” with Jerusalem, which is easy to do, but Jerusalem crashes back in **Revelation 11:2, 8, 13**.
 - b. But remember, this entire book has been about a challenge between what’s unholy, and what’s holy;
 1. The Dragon, and the Father—The beast, and the Lamb—The false prophet, and the Holy Spirit—The fallen angels, and God’s holy angels—The kingdom of darkness, and the Kingdom of God—The mark of the beast, and the seal of God—False prophets, and the true prophets of God—The earthly Jerusalem, and the heavenly Jerusalem—The harlot, and the pure and spotless Bride of Christ—Those who dwell on earth, and those who dwell in heaven—The great city of Babylon, and the Great city of Jerusalem.
 - c. *Jerusalem is the chaste bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:2,9)*
 1. *Babylon is the harlot with whom the kings of the earth fornicate (Rev. 17:2)*
 - d. *Jerusalem’s splendor is the glory of God (Rev. 21:11-12)*
 1. *Babylon’s splendor comes from the exploiting of her empire (Rev. 17:4)*
 - e. *In the New Jerusalem the nations walk by her light, which is the glory of God (Rev.21:24)*
 1. *Babylon corrupts and deceives the nations (Rev. 17:2)*
 - f. *In the New Jerusalem the kings of the earth bring their glory into her (Rev. 21:24)*
 1. *Babylon rules over the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:18)*
 - g. *In the New Jerusalem uncleanness, abominations and impurities are excluded (Rev. 21:27)*
 1. *In Babylon uncleanness, abominations and impurities are included (Rev. 17:4,5; 18:23)*
 - h. *In the New Jerusalem the water of life and the leaves heal the nations (Rev. 21:6; 22:1-2)*
 1. *In Babylon, the wine makes the nations drunk (Rev. 14:8; 17:2; 18:3)*
 - i. *In the New Jerusalem there is life and healing (Rev. 22:1-2)*
 1. *In Babylon there is only the blood of slaughter (Rev. 17:6; 18:24)*
 - j. *In The New Jerusalem the people of God are called into her (Rev. 22:14)*
 1. *In Babylon the people of God are called out of her (Rev.18:4)*

E. These are the final words in this chapter, a perfect segue to the following chapter, the actual, explicit fall of the great city Babylon in Revelation 18. The first thing John saw in this vision, is the last thing interpreted by the angel.