

Book of Revelation

Chapter 17 – Babylon, the “Great Prostitute”

Revelation 17 - Overview

- Revelation 17 covers the judgment of the “great prostitute” or the religious system of Babylon
- Revelation 18 covers the judgment of the commercial system of Babylon
- Babylon in Scripture has always been a city and a name symbolizing main characteristics of that city and mentality throughout history (as Rome can refer to Roman Catholicism or the city of Rome – or as Hollywood refers to either the actual city or the industry itself)

Revelation 17:1-6 ESV

- **17** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, **2** with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” **3** And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. **4** The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. **5** And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” **6** And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Revelation 17:1

- An angel who previously poured out a bowl judgment explained things to John as John viewed the events
- Seated on many waters likely refers to all of humanity (17:15)
- The absence of a specific geographical site probably indicates the spiritual aspect of Babylon here
- Babylon leads the world to chase after false religions
- It started with actual Babylon and will continue until destroyed during the Tribulation

Revelation 17:2

- Kings committing sexual immorality
- These leaders led the world in spiritual adultery; the worship of false gods
- The world became “drunk” – influenced or controlled by the seditious nature of false religions
- We see that today with people who believe lies because they have rejected the truth (Romans 1)

Revelation 17:3

- Notice the woman is sitting on a scarlet beast that had blasphemous names
- She is sitting on the beast, in essence in a position of control over it
- It is mutually beneficial because Antichrist supports her

Revelation 17:4

- The woman's clothing was purple, symbolizing royalty
- Though adorned with jewels, she was filthy inside
- The cup she carried added to her royal "look" but it contained more spiritual adultery
- Though she appears outwardly attractive, she is inwardly unclean

Revelation 17:5

- During John's day, prostitutes wore their names on their headbands
- This "prostitute" (system) includes all that is blasphemous and opposed to the One, True God
- Her character is completely evil
- She represents the fountainhead of every false religion – paganism, false religions, ecumenism; perversions of Christianity and non-Christian religions

Revelation 17:6

- Babylon represents the system that destroyed Christians and rejoiced in their deaths throughout the ages, but especially during Tribulation
- John “marvels” here possibly because
 - Here was a religious system claiming to honor God but killing His saints
 - He may have wondered why God allowed that system to exist and thrive
- In John’s day, the Roman Empire was the greatest manifestation of Babylon to that point

Revelation 17:7

- Because John “marveled,” the angel promises to reveal the mysteries
- It was difficult for John to understand the woman and the beast and the relationship between the two
- He was seeing visions that represented these things, which may have caused confusion for him
- Verses 7-14 explain more about the Beast
- Verses 15-18 explain more about the woman

Revelation 17:8

- The beast who was, is not and would rise from pit is likely the Roman Empire in its various forms
- It speaks of a revived dead nation
- The Roman Empire it no longer existed as imperial Rome in the 5th century
- The world marvels at the “resurrection” of this beast (nation)
- Rome went through various stages:
 - Kings
 - Consuls (the two highest magistracies in the Roman Republic)
 - Dictators
 - Decemvirs (10 men commissions established by Rome)
 - Military Tribunes
 - Imperialism

Revelation 17:8

- It appears this beast (nation) rises from the abyss, the home of Satan and his demons
- It rises at the request and work of the Antichrist
- It is at this point it appears Satan will give Antichrist supernatural powers when he does this
- Interesting that this world empire is not destroyed by any other empire but by Jesus Himself in Revelation 19:20 upon His return
- The Antichrist's resuscitation of "Rome" will seriously impress earth dwellers
- They will deem him the savior but will actually be a slaughterer
- He will deceive everyone except the elect (Matthew 24:24)

Next Time:

- Revelation 17:9-16
 - 7 heads
 - 7 kings
 - Beast is an 8th but belongs to the 7
 - 10 horns
 - 10 kings
 - More about the prostitute
 - The beast and kings hate the prostitute