

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 3RD, 2019 // BOOK OF REVELATION

*Revelation 17 prophesies of the final product of civilization being a great and wicked city that is the capital of the Antichrist and destined for the wrath of God.*

## THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT PROSTITUTE (17:1-2)

Chapter 17 marks the beginning of a new vision that will take us through to 21:8.

- In this vision, John sees two women that symbolize two cities- Babylon the Great & the new Jerusalem.
- The 1st city, symbolized by a prostitute, will be the last great city of earth that is the epicenter of all technology, culture, and pleasure (Babylon the Great, chapter 17).

The 2nd city, symbolized by a pure bride, is a representation of God's people redeemed and submitted to God (the new Jerusalem, chapter 21).

- One of the seven angels from the bowl judgments becomes John's tour guide and invites him to come with him to see the "judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters".
- Why use such lewd and vulgar imagery?

This graphic imagery of a prostitute helps us understand how the world's culture will be at the end of all things.

- This is the spirit of seductive, godless culture, actively engaged in the deception and destruction of God's people.
- It symbolizes the arrogance and corruption of false religion and political power.
- The kings of the earth will commit "sexual immorality"

This is symbolic language to mean that the kings of the earth will take part in all that is corrupt, excessive, vile, and wicked.

- But not just all kings, the dwellers on earth have become "drunk with the wine" of this "sexual immorality".
- This means that humanity will become "intoxicated" on perversity, corruption, immorality, greed, and hatred of God and God's people.

This city, Babylon the Great, will be the capital city of the Antichrist's empire and epicenter for the false religion of Antichrist worship and the demonic miracles of his false prophet.

- While Babylon the Great will be an actual city, it is also representative of a mindset that is already present today.
- This mindset is as old as human civilization, and can be traced back to Genesis (11:4).

## DRUNK WITH BLOOD (17:3-6)

In ch. 12, we saw a woman in the wilderness (that represented Israel), but this woman is different.

- This woman John sees is "sitting on a scarlet beast"- it is the beast (the Antichrist) that is her means of dispersing her evil seductions throughout human civilization.
- The beast is covered with blasphemous names- showing the claims to divine status of Antichrist.

The beast had 7 heads and 10 horns, which will be explained later in the chapter.

- This woman riding on the beast is arrayed in purple and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls.
- This doesn't mean fashion or jewelry is evil, it simply symbolizes her outward beauty, seductiveness, and decadence.
- In her hand was a golden cup, which obviously is a sign of great wealth and power.

But the inside of the cup is filled with "abominations and impurities".

- This shows the true nature of evil and sin- it's attractive, seductive, and alluring on the outside and full of disgusting impurity on the inside (Gen. 3:6).
- On her forehead she had written a "name of mystery" (vs. 5)- Roman prostitutes would often wear their names on a headband.

"Babylon the Great" shows that this is a city like the original Babylon, but it also has taken on many forms down throughout various generations (John's "Babylon" was Rome).

- "Mother of prostitutes"- she is the source and the final embodiment of all things idolatrous, wicked, vile, and excessive.
- "...of earth's abominations"- she's the spirit behind all perverse behavior and thought.

Not only that, she's "drunk with the blood of the saints", "...martyrs of Jesus".

- This city will actively and violently war against any followers of Jesus, just as other "Babylons" have done in the past.
- Though this woman represents a final city of ultimate wickedness, every generation will have its "Babylon"-and we must make sure we aren't seduced by her.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN & THE BEAST (17:7-14)

When John sees this woman, he "marvels greatly", but the angel quickly offers an interpretation to what John has seen (vs. 7).

- First, the angel explains who the beast is- clearly this is the Antichrist, the final political leader who will lead the whole earth astray during the last days.
- The titles, "who is, was, and will come" mock Jesus and further show Antichrist's blasphemy.

This beast will rise "from the bottomless pit" (vs. 8), which is the home of demons.

- This is either a way of saying that the Antichrist will be influenced demonically, or one possible interpretation is that he will be a demon with human appearance.
- Verse 8 tells us that those who are not believers will "marvel at the beast" and be deceived by his apparent divine status.

We see the riddle language used to describe "666" in chapter 13 used again- "this calls for... wisdom".

- The 7 heads are "7 mountains" on which the woman is seated.
- In the 1st century, the anti-God city of the day was Rome, which was famous for its 7 hills.
- Clearly, this is a symbolic vision and it can't just be Rome, but maybe this a clue to the type of city this will be.

The 7 heads are also "7 kings", 5 of whom had fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come (vs. 10).

- Most commentators believe that this represents 7 eras of powerful kingdoms that stood in opposition to God: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Rome, and ?
- Rome is the kingdom that is, and other that has not yet come is Antichrist's final world empire.

The "8th king" mentioned in vs. 11 is identified as the beast, which belongs to the 7th and goes to destruction.

- This shows that the last kingdom (the 7th) will give all authority to the antichrist who will be the king of the 7th kingdom.
- Essentially, the head's of the beast show that Satan's influence has existed through godless civilizations since the beginning of time.

The 10 horns of the beast are 10 other kings, possibly the "kings from the east" in chap. 16.

- This is a prophecy that there will be some sort of global government that will be short (for an "hour"), probably the 42 months at the end of the 7 years of tribulation.
- They have one purpose- to unite together to war against Jesus, but they will be conquered (vs. 14).

## THE GREAT CITY (17:15-18)

The angel shifts attention from explaining the beast to interpreting the prostitute.

- The "waters" on which she sat represent "peoples, multitudes, languages, and nations"
- This is saying that while the prostitute does represent an actual city, she will be an influencer of culture on a global scale that leads astray all who are not marked by God.
- Vs. 16 presents a shocking twist.

One would not expect or anticipate the beast (the Antichrist) and the ten horns (the global federation led by the Antichrist) to hate the prostitute (the city, Babylon the Great).

- A tried and true principle is that evil will always self-destruct and cave in on itself.
- The city and this culture of decadence, perversity, and evil will be brought to ruin, as she will become "desolate" and "naked" (vs. 16)

All the glamour, wealth, and status will be stripped away from this city and culture (sin always leaves us like this, doesn't it?).

- Her "flesh will be eaten" (reminiscent of Jezebel 1 Kgs. 21:23), and will be "burnt by fire".
- This is a fitting end to an evil city and a foreshadowing of hell that follows.
- God's built into the universe a law of sowing and reaping that can't be violated (Gal. 6:7-8)

This city and culture that existed to "please the flesh" will ultimately meet destruction.

- When we're leading a life that follows a beast, we shouldn't be surprised when in the end we're eaten alive.
- In vs. 17 we find out that this whole scenario is God-ordained to judge this city and end evil once and for all.

## A TALE OF TWO CITIES (CITY OF EARTH & CITY OF GOD)

- The choices we make every day are simply reflections of the city in which we have residence.
- Are you being seduced by worldliness and all of its allure and attraction?
- Are you remembering that "beauty is deceitful" (Prov. 31:30) and the promises of this world and of sin are empty, deceptive and hollow?