

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 23RD–24TH, 2024 // REVELATION

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

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

- In this vision, John sees two women who symbolize two cities, Babylon the Great and 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, Ch. 17).

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

- One of the 7 angels from the bowl judgments becomes John's tour guide and invites him to see the "judgment of the notorious 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 a 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 Earth will commit "sexual immorality."

This is symbolic language, meaning the kings of 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 on the wine" of this "sexual immorality."
- This means 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 and will grow more prevalent.
- This mindset is as old as human civilization and can be traced back to Genesis (11:4).

In Genesis 11:1–10, humanity united to build an empire (Babel) that was organized to express hostility and defiance against God.

- Babylon was later the capital of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah.
- To the Jews, Babylon was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty/selfishness, the enemy of God's people, and the epicenter of sin, humanism, lust, materialism, and greed.

## BRIDGES TO BABYLON.

The idea, attitude, and spirit of Babylon (hostility and defiance against God, immorality, materialism, entertainment) is still alive and well in the world today, and one could say it is personified and expressed in many cities around the world.

- If you've ever been to Las Vegas, Hollywood, Amsterdam, Berlin, New York, Los Angeles, etc., it is easy to spot this mindset of Babylon.

## DRUNK WITH BLOOD (REVELATION 17:3–6)

In Ch. 12, we saw a woman in the wilderness (who represented Israel), but the woman here is vastly different.

- This woman 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 Antichrist's claims to divine status.

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 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 is 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 (v. 5). Roman prostitutes would often wear their names on a headband.

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

- "Mother of Prostitutes" is the source and final embodiment of all things idolatrous, wicked, vile, and excessive.
- "Detestable Things of the Earth"—she is the spirit behind all perverse behavior & thought.

Not only that, she is "drunk with the blood of the saints" and the "witnesses to 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 are not seduced by her.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST (REVELATION 17:7–14)

When John saw this woman, he was "greatly astonished," but the angel quickly offered an interpretation (v. 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 "was, and is not, and is to come" mock Jesus and show Antichrist's blasphemy.

This beast will rise "from the abyss" (v. 8), which is the home of demons.

- This is either a way of saying the Antichrist will be influenced demonically, or that he will be a demon with human appearance.
- V. 8 tells us that those who are not Believers will "be astonished when they see the beast" and be deceived by his apparent divine status.

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

- The 7 heads are "seven 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. It isn't meant to be interpreted as completely literal, but it may be a clue to the type of city this will be.

The 7 heads are also "seven kings," five of whom "have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come" (v. 10).

- Most commentators believe this represents 7 eras of powerful kingdoms that stood in opposition to God: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and?
- Rome is the kingdom that is. The one that has not yet come is Antichrist's final world empire.

The "eighth king" mentioned in v. 11 is identified as the beast, which belongs to the seven and is going 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 heads of the beast show that Satan's influence has existed through godless civilizations since the beginning.

The 10 horns of the beast are 10 other kings, possibly the "kings from the east" in Ch. 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 to war against Jesus and His saints, but they will be conquered (v. 14).

## THOSE WHO ARE WITH THE LAMB...

- "Called"—they responded to God's call by placing their faith in Jesus.
- "Chosen"—the saints of God with the Lamb are those whom God chose to set His love on and save.
- "Faithful"—they demonstrated true, saving faith by being faithful to Jesus even to the end.

## THE GREAT CITY (REVELATION 17:15–18)

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

- The "waters" on which she sat represent "peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages" (v. 15).
- This is saying that while the prostitute does represent an actual city, she will be an influencer of culture on a global scale who leads astray all not marked by God.
- V. 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 culture of decadence, perversity, and evil will be brought to ruin, as she will become "desolate and naked" (v. 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 in 1 Kgs. 21:23), and she will be burnt by fire.
- This is a fitting end to an evil city and a foreshadowing of hell.
- God has built into the universe a law of sowing and reaping that can't be violated (Gal. 6:7–8).
- Galatians 6:7–8 (NIV)

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

- When we lead a life that follows a beast, we shouldn't be surprised when we're eaten alive in the end.
- In v. 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

- Babylon the Great: those who love only themselves and seek pleasure, comfort, power, fame, money, and their own glory and good.
- The New Jerusalem: those who are united by their love for God and their pursuit of glorifying Him in all they do.
- Babylon the Great is a place where we're told to indulge in what feels good, looks good, and promotes our own causes, opinions, and mindsets.
- It's a place where we're told that the greatest virtue is being "true to ourselves," "following our hearts," and giving in to every desire of our flesh.
- On the path to The New Jerusalem, we are told to deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24), crucify our flesh (Gal. 5:24), and submit to God (James 4:7).
- We're told that the greatest virtue is "losing our lives" to find real life; we're told that the greatest and most enduring treasures and pleasures are not on this Earth but in the presence of God.
- The mindsets and attitudes of these two cities are opposed to each other—we can't live in both!
- Are you being seduced by worldliness and all 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?