

“REVELATION: DOES IT DESCRIBE OUR DAY?” SERIES

#16: “Chapters 17-19”

INTRO:

We’ve just seen, in chapters 15 and 16, what happens to those who bear the mark of the beast. God’s wrath is **“poured out”** on them. Now, God shows John, in symbolic pictures, what happens to Babylon, the beast from the sea, and the false prophet, all of whom symbolize the antichristian forces of the world, which are: the sinful allure of the world; antichristian powers of the world; and the false religions of the world.

In chapter 17 John is shown...

...THE NATURE AND HISTORY OF BABYLON.

One of the seven angels who poured out bowls of wrath said to John: **“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 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.”**

Now, I don’t pretend to know what a **“great prostitute”** looks like, but I think I see the allegorical meaning of this part of the vision. Babylon represents that which draws people away from God – the allure of the world: sex, money, fame, etc. These things have captured the hearts of most of the people of the world, especially those in positions of power. Immorality of all kinds, greed, selfishness, etc.

Then John says: **“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. 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. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: ‘Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.’ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”**

This gal is bad news, I tell you. A prostitute riding a red beast with seven horns and ten heads: picture that, if you can.

The city of Babylon that she represents was the ultimate as far as worldly cities go. It was a great industrial and commercial metropolis. It symbolizes everything about this world that lures good people away from God. It’s shown to John in pictures of past, present, and future. While its looks and location may change, its essence doesn’t. Once known as Babylon, then Rome, then New York City maybe, then somewhere else...she is still a prostitute.

Her golden cup contains whatever is used by the world to entice believers to be unfaithful. Her fall takes place throughout the church age, as believers resist her allure,

but in the end, she is left naked and destitute, even by those who partook of what she had to offer.

But John doesn't understand what he's seeing, so the angel explains it to him:

***“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come, he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth, but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*”**

“The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

This **“beast”** represents a composite of several things. Hendriksen comments:

“The seven heads have a twofold symbolical significance. They indicate both the present embodiment of the beast and all of its embodiment throughout history. First of all, then, these seven heads symbolize seven mountains, the seven hills of Rome, viewed as city and as capital of the Roman empire. It is the great city which rules over the kings, the mighty ones of the earth. It was, in John's day, the center of antichristian persecution. But it was also the center of antichristian seduction, allurements, enticement: the woman, the harlot, sits on these seven hills! Secondly, these seven heads also symbolize seven kings, that is, kingdoms. . . Five fell, namely, Ancient Babylonia, Assyria, New Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greco-Macedonia. One **is**, namely, Rome. The seventh is not yet come, but when he comes, he will have to remain some little while. The emphasis is on the word **“remain.”** Is this seventh head the collective title for all antichristian governments between the fall of Rome and the final empire of antichrist that is going to oppress the church in the days just preceding Christ's second coming? In the language of the Apocalypse, this entire Gospel Age is but a little while. The beast that **“was and is not”** is also an eighth, namely, the final, most terrible

dominion of antichrist toward the close of history. Does the clause **“and is of the seven”** indicate that, in some sense, one of the former antichristian empires will be re-established? And if so, which one? At any rate, **“he goes into perdition”** (pp. 204-205).

In chapter 18 God reveals...

**...THE INEVITABLE, COMPLETE, AND IRREVOCABLE CHARACTER OF
BABYLON'S FALL.**

Verses 1-3: **“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons. A haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.’”**

Now, Babylon's ultimate fall hasn't happened yet, but her complete collapse is so certain that it's shown to John as a done deal. Nations have been drinking her wine, as have leaders of governments and those who buy and sell. They've all been taken in by the allures of sex, money, and luxurious living. They're in her house today!

Verses 4-8: **“Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back as she herself has paid back others and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’ For this reason, her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.’”**

This is God's admonition to his people to come out of the world of sin and degradation. Jesus admonished his disciples to be **in** the world, but not **of** the world, didn't He? The apostle Paul warned about sinful companions: He said in 1st Corinthians 15:33, **“Bad company ruins good morals.”** It reminds me of the parrot that flew out through the window and joined the crows in the cornfield. When the farmer cut loose with his 12-gauge and went to pick up the dead crows, he found the parrot dead on the ground too. When you hang out with crows...

The allures of this world are haughty and boastful, but their demise will be quick and final. Babylon will fall!

In chapter 19 John sees...

...THE REJOICING IN HEAVEN AT THE DEMISE OF BABYLON AND THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB.

Verses 1-10: *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,*

*“Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
² for his judgments are true and just;
for he has judged the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”*

³ *Once more they cried out,*

*“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”*

⁴ *And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”* ⁵ *And from the throne came a voice saying,*

*“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”*

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

⁶ *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

*“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—*

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ *And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”* ¹⁰ *Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must*

not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

All heaven celebrates God’s victory and Babylon’s demise. Now the marriage supper of the Lamb can happen.

The twenty-four elders, who represent all the members of the church, and the four cherubim, that represent all the cherubim, lead the praises to God. Then, all that serve God are invited to join in the time of praise.

What’s this ***“marriage supper of the lamb”***? Well, we need to understand the Hebrew wedding. There are four parts, or steps:

1. There’s the “betrothal,” which is more binding than today’s “engagement.” The terms of marriage are accepted in the presence of witnesses, and God’s blessing is pronounced upon the union. From this point on, the bride and groom are considered legally married.
2. There’s an “interval” before the wedding during which time the groom pays the dowry to the father of the bride if he hasn’t already done so. Sometimes this is in the form of service. This is usually six months to a year.
3. At the close of the “interval,” there is a procession. The bride is beautifully adorned, and the groom is in his best attire, accompanied by his friends. The bride is escorted to the groom’s home or to his parents’ home.
4. Finally, there is a “wedding feast” or “marriage supper.” This usually lasted 7 to 14 days.

The church is the bride, who has been betrothed, and Christ is the groom. The dowry has been paid. The interval has ended. It’s time for the procession and the marriage feast, which shall last for all eternity.

Verses 11-21: ***¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.***

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both

small and great.”¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

In verses 11-16, John sees a vision of heaven opening and Christ riding in on a white horse to judge the world and make war against Satan and his forces. We're seeing ***Armageddon*** again.

In verses 17-21, an angel calls all the birds to come and eat the flesh of all the men and horses killed in the battle. The beast and false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, what's this symbolic of? It's telling us that when Jesus returns, anti-Christian human governments and false religions and philosophies will ultimately die, and the church of Jesus will live on.

IN CLOSING...

How close are we to this time? Inquiring minds want to know. Many of us want to know. But we can't. We must simply be ready by being faithful to Christ and our fellow Christians. Next Sunday: Chapters 20-22.