

Revelation #42, #43 and #44

June 4, 11 and 18, 2023

Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

Today's Message: The Woman and the Beast; Revelation 17:1-18

(Note: These notes on Revelation 17:1-18 accompany the audio sermons listed as Revelation #42, Revelation #43, and #44. Revelation #42 covers 17:1-6, #43 covers 17:7-11 and #44 covers 17:12-18.)

If you remember from our study of Revelation 16 we made clear that Revelation 17 and 18 does not follow chronologically with Revelation 16. In fact, Revelation 16 continues beginning in Revelation 19. And, therefore, 17 and 18 serve to detail the judgment of Babylon as the religious system of Satan, and the judgment of Babylon as the single political system of Satan on earth. If ever you wondered, exactly what is being judged through these judgments? The answer would become more evident from studying 17 and 18.

In these two chapters we are shown what Babylon—the Empire of the Dragon— looks like religiously and economically. And we see that it is God who is ultimately judging these world's systems: In Revelation 17 we see the nature of Antichrist's one world religion; and in Revelation 18 we see the opulence and splendor of a Godless economy, but we also see its destruction by God through the bowl judgments.

Over the next three sermons (#42, #43 and #44) we will look at the nature of, the authority or power of, and the destruction of Babylon as the one world religion. What do we mean by "nature"? We mean the very characteristics, or moral constitution of this one world religious empire. Let us be clear, this religious system is rebellious against the true God by nature; in other words, it is characteristically against God in every respect. It is Satanic in every way. It promotes a love of sin and darkness, death and destruction; it perverts God's created order, and completely rejects Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord.

One more comment before moving into 17. False religion is nothing new. From the very beginning Satan has sought to diminish God's word, His works, His Authority and His right to be worshiped. When John is told that the title on the *woman's* forehead includes, *The Mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth*, it signals the long history of this *woman*, the *prostitute*, known as *Babylon the Great*. Beginning on the *Plain of Shinar* where *Babylon* was built, and the people defied God's mandate to multiply and fill the whole earth, to Babylon the ancient religious home to over 180 shrines dedicated to the goddess Ishtar¹, to Pergamum, the seat of Satan, where Satan has his throne, into our day ripe for the unification

¹ Ishtar is still visible and active in the world today. Her image is prominent in many monuments and government buildings throughout the world and even in our country. More broadly, the ancient gods and goddesses still *speak*, prevailing upon the thoughts of movers and shakers and leaders world wide. The idea that the ancient religions died long ago is simply not true; they have, in many cases, been re-imaged,

of all the world religions under one united, unholy trinity consisting of the Dragon, Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

I have to quote John MacArthur. He writes, "As previously noted, chronology halts in chapters 17 and 18 as the scene shifts from God's judgments to Antichrist's world empire, the target of those judgments. The great harlot that will be judged is not an actual prostitute. The term "harlot"/ "prostitute" is a metaphor for false religion, spiritual defection, idolatry, and religious apostasy. Besides Babylon, several cities in Scripture are designated "harlot" cities because of their idolatry and pursuit of false religion. Nineveh (Nahum 3:1,4), Tyre (Is. 23:15-17), and, sadly, Jerusalem (Is.1:21) are examples of cities that committed spiritual fornication."

John begins this chapter by telling us that one of the seven angels of the bowl judgments came to speak to him.

I. (17:1-6, 15) The Prostitute Described

A. (17:1, 15) She sits in a seat of authority: "sits on many waters."

1. The "many waters" are not to be considered literally. Why?

2. 17:15 gives the explanation.

a) "Then the angel said to me, 'The many waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations (ethnic groups) and languages.'"

(1) The point is: This false religion is **dominating** the thinking and actions, alliances and allegiances of the *inhabitants of the earth*!

(a) The whole world is committed to the false system of worship in the Babylonian system.

(b) The God of the Bible is out, and Ishtar and others are in!

B. (17:2-3) The Alliances of the prostitute are identified

1. The kings of the earth (the world leaders)

a) The world leaders supported this false religion

(1) Supported: morally, economically, socially, militarily, politically, religiously (MacArthur)

b) Endorsed the false religion

c) Engaged in the practices of this false religion.

(1) Every practice of these kings was a perversion of true godliness

(a) This is especially true of sexuality. What God created for good and for goodness is perverted and used improperly.

reimagined and renamed, but they are still active. This gives us pause to consider that the false religion of Revelation 17 is either at hand, or already present to some degree. It is something to watch for.

- (i) Ex: homosexuality, gender confusion; adultery, pornography and all acts of sexual immorality.
 - 2. "The inhabitants of the earth became intoxicated by the wine of her adulteries."
 - a) God will use her rebellion and give her strength to seduce those people.
 - (1) Jer. 51:17: "Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged."
 - 3. John is carried away by the Spirit into the desert and sees the third alliance:
 - a) The Scarlet Beast
 - (1) She is sitting on the scarlet beast (**the same beast as in 13:1**)
 - (a) This beast is the same as described in 13:1,4; 14:9; 16:10
 - (b) This is **Antichrist**: sinful, blasphemous and strong
 - (i) Scarlet indicates luxury (2 Sam 1:24), sin (Is. 1:18)
 - (ii) And "covered with blasphemous names"
 - (a) He takes upon himself names that should only be ascribed to God.
 - (iii) Seven heads (seven strong governments) and
 - (iv) Ten horns are ten kings under the beast's authority.
 - C. (17:4-5) Her symbolic clothing and her "title" indicating her actual global influence
 - 1. Dressed in the clothing of prostitutes indicates her immorality and her success
 - 2. Mystery Babylon the Great The Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the earth.
 - a) Babylon here is indicative of an actual city but as a symbol of influence
 - (1) Her abominations have secreted into every system on earth.
 - D. (17:6) Her guilt before God
 - 1. Drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses for Jesus.
 - a) She is filled with a lust for violence and hatred for those who hold to the truth. Murder is in her heart!
 - 2. John is shocked by her strength, popularity and her unbridled wickedness..

II. (17:7-14,18) The Prostitute Explained

- A. John is confused by the prostitute and of her connection with the beast
 - 1. Revelation 17:3-14 describes an alliance between the woman and the beast.
 - a) I think this chapter shows us that the empire of **Antichrist needed** the false religious system to subdue and order the inhabitants of the earth.
- B. (17:18) Who is the woman/ prostitute?
 - 1. The great city, which rules over the kings of the earth

- a) Babylon: Is it literally Babylon the city? Or symbolic of the one world false religious system of the earth? I don't know for sure. But at this time, my thinking is that it describes a religious system which has been around since Babel described in Genesis 11.
 - b) She has to be eliminated as we see in 17:15-17 because her influence was great and was diminishing the **ambitions** of Antichrist to be worshiped.
 - c) The woman (false religious system) is to be used by Antichrist to gain control over the inhabitants of the earth.
- C. (17:7-14) The angel explains the History of **the beast** upon which the woman was riding.
- 1. (17:7) Seven heads and 10 horns
 - a) Indicates Antichrist's world empire with subordinates
 - b) Remember, the woman is riding the beast. Antichrist is supporting the woman, yet it seems that the woman is momentarily prominent, until she is destroyed.
 - 2. (17:8) The astonishment of humanity over the beast's miraculous appearing
 - a) "...who once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss"
 - (1) "Once was": the Beast's rise to power (Dan. 9:26-27)
 - (2) "Now is not": The deadly wound suffered **See Rev. 13:3**.
 - (3) "Will come up": The Beast's miraculous recovery, **Rev.13:3-4**
 - (a) Then, **see Rev. 13:11-12** This helps us to see what was the purpose of the woman (false religion). It is important for us to see here that the "**False Prophet**" actually leads the world by forcing the world to worship Antichrist, as we see in **Rev. 13:11-15**
 - (4) Out of the Abyss: holding place of demons; evil, **see 11:7**
 - (a) Rev. 17:8 and 11:7 same event. **How** can we connect the two verses? The two witnesses come just before the 7th trumpet which contains the 7 bowls. The Beast comes up out of the Abyss before the 7th Trumpet in 11:7, so I think we can place the *miracle* of 17:8 at this time.
 - (5) Nevertheless, he "will go to his destruction," **unlike our Lord Jesus who was raised, and lives forever in glory!**
 - (a) **Read Acts 2:22-24; 2:32-36 (Christ exalted by God!)**
 - (b) Beast's destruction at Christ's second coming, Rev 19:19
 - 3. (17:9-11) John gets a history lesson: The Beast is **both a King and a Kingdom**.
 - a) Seven heads: seven hills (**empires**) on which the woman sits (over time)

- b) Five (empires) have fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece
- c) One is: Rome was the current empire
- d) The other one that has not yet come: The empire of Antichrist yet to come
- e) The Beast is the eighth king. **He was the seventh, but had the “miraculous” resurrection. Now he becomes even more powerful and is worshiped as supreme ruler of his global empire.**

(1) (17:11b) BUT, God Himself **will** (future) destroy him (19:19ff)

4. (17:12-14) The future destruction of the 10 puppet kings and of the beast

- a) The ten and the beast are given authority for one hour (hour had come)²
 - (1) This tells us that Antichrist's moment of glory will be short-lived.
 - (2) Like the woman, they are drunk with a lust for murder and blood.
- b) They have **1** ambition: To Wage war against the Lamb.
 - (1) They use their authority to attack the Lamb. But as **Revelation 19:19-21** demonstrates, they will fail and fall to destruction!
- c) The Lamb and His faithful followers prevail!

III. (17:15-17) **The Prostitute Destroyed (whereas 17:14 looks forward, these verses look back.)**

A. (17:15) Review the verse. This is a further description of the “prostitute/ harlot”.

1. I think this is illustrating the historic *span* and *dominion* of false worship

a) From Eden to Revelation the **satanic rebellion continues!**

(1) “Darkness has covered the earth” (Isaiah 60:2)

(a) From Cain to Nimrod; from Babel to Babylon; Babylon to the present worldwide ecumenical movement to unite all religions, to “Mystery Babylon the mother of prostitutes and the abominations of the earth (worldwide).”

B. (17:16) Antichrist and the 10 kings despise and destroy the harlot/ prostitute (**mid-trib**)

1. As a result of his “miraculous resurrection” Antichrist is the undisputed world wide ruler of all people **he has no need nor stomach for religion**. Why?

a) **2 Thessalonians 2:4, “He will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”**

2. “They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” This describes her utter destruction.

a) **PRN: Satan has no friends and keeps no lovers. (Contrast w/ Jn 15:12-14)**

C. (17:17) God Executes His plan and purpose so that His words are fulfilled

1. Every evil work and act of Antichrist, though “satanically inspired...are, however, precisely in the scope of God’s sovereign plan.” (MacArthur)

² See Luke 22:53, Jesus was speaking after his arrest: “...but this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

2. This verse should comfort us: Why?
 - a) God is Sovereign over all: "Our God sits in heaven and does whatever pleases Him!" (Ps. 115:3)
 - (1) We can rest in His Sovereignty even when evil seems to have the upper hand! Why?
 - (a) Because "God put it into their hearts to accomplish His purpose"
 - (i) A similar event is recorded in 2 Kings 9. God commands Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab and kill Jezebel. **See 2 Kings 9:6-10,30-37.**
 - (2) We can know that our God has a set purpose to every event under heaven including in your own life and situation! How?
 - (a) Satan is on a short leash.
 - (i) "Until God's words are fulfilled!"
 - (a) This is the destruction of the harlot!