

# The Book of Revelation

Lesson Twenty-Eight

Revelation 17:1 – 18:24

## THE LAMB SHALL OVERCOME!

### Introduction:

1. The second section of the book of Revelation has shown how Satan has fought throughout the ages against God and His faithful remnant.
2. Chapter 12 introduced a woman who was identified as the faithful remnant of God's people.
3. Rome's political power and religious pressure were used to persecute this woman by turning Christians from their faith or ensuring their deaths.
4. Chapter 17 introduces another woman, of an entirely different nature – a harlot, representing the worldly city/empire of Babylon.
5. Babylon's fall had been announced previously; now, its time has come.

- I. The Harlot Identified (17:1-6)
  - A. In his introduction to this chapter, Homer Hailey emphasized the three means that Satan used to attack the church:
    1. Political persecution, represented by the beast from the sea
    2. False religion, symbolized by the beast from the earth
    3. "The world of lust," personified by the harlot.
  - B. One of the angels declared that he would reveal to John the judgment of the harlot who sits upon many waters.
    1. The "many waters" represented "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (languages)" (cf. vs. 15).
    2. This is a reference to God's judgment on Babylon in the time of Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 51:12-13).
    3. The revelation of judgment will be the subject of chapters 17 & 18.
  - C. In the Old Testament, there are four cities that are described as harlots – Tyre (Isaiah 23:15-17), Babylon (Isaiah 47:5-15), Nineveh (Nahum 3:1-4), and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20).
    1. Tyre – *wealth, materialism*
    2. Babylon – *lust, pleasure, worldliness*
    3. Nineveh – *cruelty, conquest, power*
    4. Jerusalem – *religious corruption, spiritual adultery*
  - D. The symbol of prostitution represents spiritual adultery, unfaithfulness to the Lord.
  - E. However, it is also connected to the underlying lust or appetite for worldliness – wealth and power.
    1. Rome, the fourth world empire prophesied by Daniel, was a mixture of all the powers that had come before.
- Thus, Babylon in Revelation is a symbolic name for Rome.
- F. Because of her powerful influence, Babylon had seduced the nations of the world into participating in her wickedness for profit (cf. 14:8; Jeremiah 51:7).
- G. John was transported into the wilderness where he saw the harlot seated on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns.
  1. This creature is the beast from the sea (13:1-6).
  2. Scarlet was the color of royalty, luxury, and excess (Matthew 27:28; cf. Isaiah 1:18).

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3. This color connects the beast and the harlot, showing that they are united in their wickedness.
4. Consider that scarlet is the opposite of white, representing purity.
- H. The harlot is clothed with the colors and riches of royalty and power.
- I. However, her true nature is that of a harlot – drinking from a gold cup that is filled with abominations.
  1. She is like the foolish woman (Proverbs 9:13-18).
  2. Hailey wrote: "She holds in her hand the cup of her own self-destruction as the consequences of her sins are turned back upon her (cf. vs. 16)."
- J. Finally, she is clearly identified by name – a mystery revealed.
  1. She is Babylon the Great, a symbol for Rome.
  2. Her nature and the consequences of her actions are revealed plainly, robbing her of her seductive power.
- K. Furthermore, she is intoxicated from drinking the blood of the Christians she has killed.
- L. Upon witnessing this display, John was astonished and caused to wonder with a great wonder.

II. The Beast Mystified (17:7-13)

- A. The angel informed John that there was no need to wonder, for he would explain the mystery of the woman and the beast.
- B. The political power of the beast also included the emperor and his decrees.
  1. Nero had persecuted the church severely, only to be outdone by the cruelty of Domitian.
  2. Thus, the beast was, and is not, and yet is – as persecution waxed and waned against the church.
- C. However, the fate of all persecutors is set – perdition, referring to utter destruction and ruin.
- D. The seven mountains are an obvious reference to Rome; the city built upon seven hills.
- E. Yet they also represented seven kings.
  1. Remember that seven is the number for completion or perfection.
  2. These represent all the powers that would arise against the Lord and His church.
  3. Though seven is completion, there is also an eighth (one of the seven), indicating that other powers will continue to arise, but they will come to ruin as all those who came before.
- F. The ten horns also represent ten kings – another symbolic number for completion in power or authority.
  1. They are aligned with the beast.
  2. However, their time is short (only one hour) because his downfall is near.
- G. They are united in purpose, to accomplish the work of Satan – the destruction of the church.

III. The Lamb Glorified (17:14)

- A. They will make war against Jesus and His disciples.
- B. However, they will be defeated because the Lamb will overcome!
- C. Jesus will be victorious, and His faithful will share in His triumph.

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IV. The Fall Specified (17:15-18)

- A. The waters on which the beast sat represented the many ethnic groups that comprised the Roman Empire.
  1. Their lack of cohesion was a cause of the downfall of Rome.
  2. This had been prophesied in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:41-43).
- B. Those kingdoms or powers that joined with the harlot would find their allegiance turned to hatred.
- C. This turmoil within the empire would also bring about its destruction.
- D. In fact, without knowing it, these powers would be accomplishing the will of God (cf. 2 Chronicles 20:23).
- E. Lastly, the woman is identified again as that great city – Babylon – that rules over the earthly kings.

V. The Punishment Justified (18:1-8)

- A. As the vision continued, John saw another angel who announced: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!"
  1. This had been announced before (14:8; 16:19).
  2. Now the fall will be decreed and described by God.
- B. The great world power would be left desolate, a wasteland haunted by demons, unclean spirits, and hated birds.
  1. This language has to do with their idolatry and its downfall (cf. Isaiah 13, 14; Jeremiah 50:2).
  2. It contrasts with the heavenly city which is free from all uncleanness and corruption (21:27).
- C. Fornication with the harlot is explained as men and nations growing wealthy by participating in the wickedness of Babylon's economy.
- D. Thus, the people of God are warned to separate themselves from the worldliness of the vile city (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; 19:12, 17; 2 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:11).
- E. The sins of Babylon had reached Heaven – the cup of her wrath was full – and the coming of judgment was certain.
- F. Thus, she would reap what she had sown.
  1. Her punishment would be in accordance with her transgressions.
  2. The scales of justice would be balanced.
- G. Long had the harlot boasted that judgment would never come for her (cf. Isaiah 47:7-9; Lamentations 1:1).
- H. Now, it would fall quickly upon her (cf. Isaiah 47:9-11).

VI. The City Eulogized (18:9-19)

- A. When the nation fell, the worldly kings who had indulged in her wealth would wail and lament over her.
  1. They hated her but would weep over their loss of power and prestige (17:16).
  2. Yet their crying would take place at a distance, for the feared being caught in the nation's destruction.
- B. The merchants would weep over their loss of income (cf. Ezekiel 26 – 28 [*the fall of Tyre*]).
  1. These merchants were wholesalers who imported great cargoes.
  2. Note that their "merchandise" included "slaves, and souls of men."

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VII. The Victory Magnified (18:20)

- A. While the worldly weep over the fall of Babylon, the righteous rejoice for the vengeance of God over wickedness and persecution.
  - 1. This is not rejoicing in the suffering of others.
  - 2. Rather, it is joy in the defeat of evil (cf. 12:12).
- B. While the kings, merchants, and sailors wept, the saints, apostles, and prophets rejoiced!
  - 1. Note the mention of the apostles here (cf. 16:6; 18:24).
  - 2. Rome's desecration of the apostles of Jesus, both physically and religiously, is avenged.
- C. With the fall of Babylon (Rome), the church is avenged by her God.

VIII. The Defeat Finalized (18:21-24)

- A. Following this, John saw an angel cast a large stone into the sea, symbolizing the complete end of this world power (cf. Jeremiah 51:61-64).
  - 1. A millstone thrown into the ocean will sink to depths at which it will never be found again.
  - 2. Likewise, Babylon's fall would be permanent – it would never rise again.
- B. The fallen nation has become as still and silent as a tomb – there are no signs of life.
- C. The reasons for Babylon's fall are clearly stated:
  - 1. Her great men were merchants – her most powerful influence in the world was the focus on materialism and luxury.
  - 2. She deceived all nations – luring them into compromise with her offer of great power and wealth, at the cost of their souls.
  - 3. She was filled with the blood of the righteous and innocent – the godly were sacrificed from the worldly and carnal.
- D. With the fall of Babylon, the martyred saints are vindicated, the faithful saints are valued, and the church is victorious!

Conclusion:

1 John 2:15-17

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.