

Revelation 17 – The Wrath of God: Babylon the Great

By Holly Effiom

LESSON: We've just finished Revelation 16, which was the pouring out of the 7 vials of the wrath of God upon the earth and the idolaters being stoned to death. And, even though a voice in Rev 16:17 says "It is done", we know that Babylon is separated out for its own specific judgment (Rev 14:8; 16:19). Revelation 17 is the clearing up of the mystery of Babylon, just as the mystery of God was cleared up with the sounding of the 7th trumpet (Rev 10:7).

V1-3

Which angel is speaking to John?

Is this the same angel that pronounced doom upon Babylon in Rev 14:8? How do you know?

What is this angel going to show John?

If God is referring to Babylon as the "great whore", what does this imply? What do we know about Babylon?

Are all whores female? What is it to be a whore – physically and spiritually?

What does it mean that this whore sits "upon many waters"?

With whom has Babylon fornicated?

To where did the spirit take John to learn about Babylon the great?

What does "wilderness" mean, spiritually?

Who else was located in the "wilderness"? Rev 12:6, 14. According to this scripture, is the wilderness a dangerous place?

Who did John see in the wilderness?

Where else did we see this beast? Rev 13:1

LESSON: We know the history of Babylon – founded by Nimrod, son of Cush, son of Ham; building of the Tower of Babel; Israel being conquered by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon; dominion being given to Babylon, first kingdom in the ascendancy of the Gentile (Japhethic) nations – and now the nation is being mentioned again, here in the end of the Bible.

Here, Babylon is referred to as a woman and a harlot or whore, residing in the wilderness. From our prior studies, we know that harlotry is likened to idolatry; and that the wilderness is not exactly a wild, dangerous place, after all, God had placed the mother of Jesus in a wilderness as a protection from the dragon (Rev 12:6, 14). So, we are given a picture of a woman, who lives in the wilderness, giving herself over to idolatry.

Is Babylon one and the same as the woman hidden in the wilderness for her protection? It is heart breaking to think so, but I suspect it is because of the great wrath that God feels toward and pours out upon her in this chapter.

This woman, believed to be Israel, the mother of our Lord Jesus, the Christian and the Jew, is found in the wilderness, riding the beast of Revelation 13, who is empowered by the dragon, the same dragon that tried to *destroy* the woman's son.

VV4-6

How is the woman arrayed?

What is she holding in her hand?

What was the mark she carried in her forehead?

What does it mean to be the "mother of harlots"? what about "...abominations of the earth"?

What was the woman's demeanor?

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What was it that intoxicated the woman?

From John's words in V6, do you suppose that he admired this woman? How do you know?

LESSON: Rev 17 introduces us to Babylon the great. "Great" in this context is not the superlative of "good". Ezekiel 16:51 describes "great" for this context as being a multiplication of abominations – and "abominations" aren't merely "sins" they are the worst of the worst of sin as described in Leviticus 18-20.

God refers to Babylon as the "great whore". When studying the "virginity" of the 144,000 in Rev 14:4-5, we learned that God used the term "whore" only upon those from whom there was an *expectation* of "virginity" – those who were in covenant with Him. Nowhere in scripture does God mention a *covenant* with Babylon, though Babylon did benefit greatly from the covenant God had with Noah. I believe this scripture is using the name Babylon metaphorically to describe another nation that will arise and exceed in greatness, on all levels, the first Babylon. Furthermore, there was some *expectation* of fidelity from Babylon the great in the relationship, if she is now being called a great whore.

The spirit took John into the wilderness to see this woman who was sitting on the beast from out of the sea. Revelation has mentioned only one other woman consigned to the wilderness, hidden from the face of the dragon – the woman in Rev 12:5-6, who gave birth to the man child who would rule the nations. The sad implication of the thought that Babylon the great and the Revelation 12 woman are one and the same is that she *joins* with the *red dragon* and *seeks* to destroy the remnant of her *own* seed, her *children* – those who keep the commandments of God, as well as those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev 12:17). She is *unnatural*... an *abomination*!

Whoredom on a spiritual level connotes that there, initially, was some covenant with God that is transgressed through idolatry – spiritual adultery. God *espoused* Himself to Israel; He had an *expectation* of fidelity with Israel, and, according to Revelation 17, Israel will give herself over to idolatry in aligning with the red dragon.

VV7-9

Why do you think the angel felt the need to assure John of an explanation?

What was the focus of the angel's explanation of the vision?

Is the angel explaining the beast from Rev 13? Is this beast an individual or a nation?

What is the name of the beast or "king" of the bottomless pit? Rev 9:11

When did this beast ascend out of the bottomless pit? Why? Rev 11:7

How is this beast related to the red dragon? Rev 12:3-4; 13:2

So, what is exactly the message the angel in imparting in Rev 17:7-8?

What is the meaning of the 7 heads of the beast?

Is the woman a "literal" woman? How would one "literal" woman be able to sit on several mountains?

LESSON: I find it interesting that God is sharing with the reader some of what John was feeling through the words chosen to describe John's thoughts and the angel's response. I would think that he was overwhelmed by what he was seeing and found words lacking to describe it. We focus so much on understanding the vision, we forget to consider what the one bringing the vision is going through.

The angel's explanation of John's vision in this particular chapter confirms what we've studied and learned in previous chapters – starting with the beast from out of the sea, it is a terrifying nation. This vision is a continuation on Daniel's chapter 7 vision. We are told that it is one and the same as Apollyon or Abaddon

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mentioned in Revelation 9, and hence will be the beast that destroys the two witnesses in Revelation 11. The beast had always existed, but was unknown at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation and we know that this beast will align itself with the red dragon and will perform the will of the red dragon.

Babylon the great – the woman in the wilderness – will be riding this beast with the seven heads, which are 7 mountains, meaning worldwide dominion. She will be riding the beast that is ruling the world.

VV10-13

How many kings does the angel say exist altogether?

How many nations were described in Dan 7:1-7?

At the time of John's vision, what had happened to 5 of the kings? How many kings were still to come?

According to V11, how many kings are there altogether?

According to V11, from where did the 8th head, or king, come?

According to V11, where will the 8th head go?

According to V11, is this the same beast upon which Babylon the great rides? How do you know?

Who are the 10 horns?

What does it mean that these 10 kings "...received no kingdom as yet..."? What do they receive instead?

Are they different in their thinking from the heads, or from the beast? How do you know?

What do we know the beast wants to do (Rev 12:17)? So, what do these kings want to do?

LESSON: In this section of scripture, the angel carefully describes the beast, Babylon the great's base of power.

In Daniel 2 and 7, we learn about a part of the beast from out of the sea. Daniel shows us 4 of the heads – Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome – and even gives the hint of the 10 horns in the 10 toes, part clay and part iron, and the 10 horns out of that 4th destructive beast with the iron teeth. And now, the angel lets us know that those 10 horns are 10 kings that will rule an hour with the 8th beast – the beast from out of the sea.

These 10 kings will be like-minded and will give their power and strength to the beast.

VV14-18

Who is the Lamb?

Is this war with the Lamb the same war on the 2 witnesses in Rev 11:7, or is it describing the war in Rev 14:1 and 16:14?

Do the 2 witnesses make war with anyone?

V1 describes the whore sitting upon many waters. What do the waters represent?

In what way does Babylon sit on many waters? Is it "ruling" over the waters?

How do the 10 horns view the whore? Why? How does God view the whore?

Spiritually speaking, what makes Babylon the great a "whore"?

According to this scripture, who would this whore have to be?

LESSON: The angel describes the whore, Babylon the great, as "...that great city..." that reigns over the kings of the earth. In Revelation 11:8, we learn that "...the great city..." is "spiritually" synonymous with Sodom and Egypt, and it is the city where Jesus was crucified – *Jerusalem*. Babylon the great is *Israel*.