



Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 2022 Q4 • SEDUCTION AND DESTRUCTION • REVELATION 17:1-18 • 11/20/2022

MAIN POINT

The worldly powers that oppose God and His people are seductive but destined for destruction.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is your favorite city to visit, and why?

Would you want to live in that city? Why or why not?

Two cities play prominent roles in the Book of Revelation—Babylon and the new Jerusalem. Babylon represents human pride and opposition to God. In the end, Babylon and all it represents will be destroyed. In the new Jerusalem, God and His people will dwell together and last forever. Why would any person choose to live in Babylon over the new Jerusalem? This study on Revelation 17 answers that question.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ REVELATION 17:1-5.

What does the angel show John in these verses?

To what does “many waters” (v. 1) refer, according to verse 15? What does this indicate about the prostitute?

The prostitute has ingratiated herself to the world population (“peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages”). That they become “drunk on the wine of her sexual immorality” (v. 2) speaks to her influence; the “many waters” speak to the extent of her influence.

Why are the pleasures of the world so seductive and intoxicating?

How did the angel describe the prostitute in verses 3-4? What does her clothing (v. 4) indicate about her? What is revealing about the cup she holds (v. 5)?

The prostitute's appearance is arresting. The cup she holds indicates her allure and seductiveness—its appearance (golden) belies the evil it contains. Ever since the garden of Eden, forbidden fruit has looked beautiful but has held the poison of sin and death (Gen. 3).

Who is the woman John sees? What does she represent (v. 5)?

The woman is identified as "Babylon the Great" in verse 5. Many interpreters identify Babylon with Rome in that day, though its significance extends beyond Rome. "Babylon the Great" represents the powers of the world that oppose God and His people. She represents the systems of godlessness that lead people away from the worship of God and toward their own destruction.

How can Christians pursue faithfulness to Christ when so much of our society seems intoxicated by immorality and idolatry?

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ REVELATION 17:6-14.

Why does John refer to the woman as being "drunk with the blood of the saints" (17:6)?

What does the angel explain to John, beginning in verse 7?

How does the angel explain the seven heads of the beast? How does the angel explain the ten horns of the beast?

The explanation of these symbols requires a "mind that has wisdom." The seven heads of the beast (vv. 3,7) are seven mountains (or hills). This seems to be a reference to Rome, which was known in antiquity as "the city on seven hills." But since the woman (Babylon) is seated on the seven mountains, and the seven heads are identified as seven kings (v. 10), it is unwise to be dogmatic on this point. The identity of the seven kings is highly disputed. Some interpreters understand this to refer to seven historic Roman emperors, but more hold that it refers to seven successive world empires (e.g., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a yet future empire). The 10 horns of Dan 7:7,20,24 (see Rev 17:3,7) are 10 kings who will rule alongside the beast during his unrivaled reign of 42 months (13:5).

What will the ten kings do, and what will be the result (Rev. 17:13-14)?

What difference does it make that Jesus is the “Lord of lords and King of kings”?

No human power has a chance against Jesus. He will ultimately defeat all opposing forces and rule forever with His followers.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ REVELATION 17:15-18.

**According to verse 17, into whose hearts has God put it to accomplish His purpose?
How do you explain this?**

Those who thought they were serving their own ends—or the ends of Satan the dragon—will ultimately serve God’s ends. God cannot be frustrated. His words will be fulfilled without fail.

What does the beast’s turn against the prostitute (v. 16) tell you about Satan’s character?

What does this passage teach us about God?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How have you seen the empty promises of sin and rebellion lead to destruction?
Explain.**

What are some of the empty promises of this world that tend to distract you from God and His purposes for you?

Read Romans 12:1-2. How can you protect yourself against the world’s seduction?

PRAYER

As you lead your group in prayer, pray that God would keep group members from being led astray by the subtle but sinful pleasures of the world and the flesh.

COMMENTARY

| REVELATION 17:1-18

17:1-2 The notorious prostitute is Babylon the Great, who in verse 5 is called “the Mother of Prostitutes,” apparently underlining the long existence of this Babylon. The many waters are explained as “peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages” in Rev 17 verse 15. Babylon has

essentially the same relationship of sexual immorality with the kings of the earth and the “earth dwellers” (v. 2) as “Jezebel” did with the sinners in the church at Thyatira (2:20).

17:3-6 The word translated desert (Gk *eremon*) is rendered “wilderness” in 12:6,14. The woman, Babylon, also has a very close relationship with the beast. To the casual outward observer, Babylon has all the trappings of wealth and royalty, but in actuality, she is characterized by everything vile and the impurities of her prostitution. The name on her forehead may imply that Babylon serves the beast, though it is not the name or number of the beast. The wider “mystery” (cryptic name) of Babylon has to do with her being the source of harlotry (Mother of Prostitutes) and moral abominations (the vile things of the earth), and killing throughout history.

17:7-8 Another aspect of the secret meaning (Gk *musterion*) of Babylon (the woman) and the beast is their hold on the “earth dwellers.” It is because their names were not... written in the book of life. It is not clear when the beast could have been manifest before in human history.

17:9 The seven heads of the beast (vv. 3,7) are seven mountains (or hills; the Gk *oros* can mean either). This seems to be a reference to Rome, which was known in antiquity as “the city on seven hills.” But since the woman (Babylon) is seated on the seven mountains, and the seven heads are identified as seven kings (v. 10), it is unwise to be dogmatic on this point.

17:10 The identity of the seven kings is highly disputed. Some interpreters understand this to refer to seven historic Roman emperors, but more hold that it refers to seven successive world empires (e.g., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a yet future empire). The phrase a little while would refer to the beast’s unrivaled reign of “42 months” (13:5).

17:11 The phrase that the beast is an eighth king yet belongs to the seven is difficult to interpret. Some in the early church thought this referred to Nero coming back to life. The best explanation, though, seems to be that, even though the physical body remains the same, the beast is two different personalities at “before-and-after” points in his career. This dramatic change could happen either (1) when the beast initially comes to prominence by killing the two witnesses (11:7) or (2) after his “resurrection” from a presumed fatal wound (13:3,12,14). That the beast is going to destruction refers to eternal torment in the lake of fire (19:20; 20:10).

17:12-13 The 10 horns of Dan 7:7,20,24 (see Rev 17:3,7) are 10 kings who will rule alongside the beast during his unrivaled reign of 42 months (13:5). This period is referred to here as one hour, much as the tribulation period is called “the hour of testing” (3:10).

17:14 The battle here takes place at the second coming of Christ (the Lamb... Lord of lords and King of kings; note the reversed wording from “King of kings and Lord of lords,” 19:16). This

verse clarifies that the armies following the Lamb in 19:14 are believers since the combined terms called... chosen...and faithful are never used of angels.

17:15-17 The prostitute (Babylon the Great) has ingratiated herself to the remaining world population (peoples... languages). The irony here is that, in the end, the very rulers (the 10 horns...and the beast) with which the pseudo-queen (v. 4; 18:7), Babylon the Great, has acted immorally (17:2), will turn on her and destroy her. Most amazing is that, ultimately, this will take place according to God's purpose and sovereign plan.