

# Revelation

## Lesson 18 Babylon And The Beast Revelation 17

Memorize the TRUTH!

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. Revelation 17:14

### The Great Prostitute — Revelation 17:1-2

### Day 1

1. a. According to Revelation 17:5 and 17:18, what does the prostitute represent?  
  
b. How does verse 2 describe the relationship between the woman — the city of Babylon — and the world leaders?  
  
c. How were the common people involved in her sin?
2. a. In the context of a world government and religion controlled by Satan, what sins might these images represent?  
  
b. How might you and I be tempted to participate in such sins?

### Learn the TRUTH!



All that glitters is not gold! Evil may look attractive, but it only leads to death. This truth will be seen in the extreme in the last days. Ask God to give you guidance and insight as you learn about the evil power of the end times. Pray that *you* will not fall for the glitter.

### The Vision of The Woman and The Beast — Revelation 17:3-6a

### Day 2

3. a. What about the woman's outward appearance might seem attractive?  
  
b. What can we conclude about her inner character from this passage?  
  
c. How is sin like the woman's outward appearance and inward character?
4. a. In contrast to its outward appearance, what does the cup contain?  
  
b. How did Jesus say a person's life might be like this cup? Matthew 23:25-28  
  
c. What can we do to avoid this kind of life? Ask God to reveal what is evil in your life!  
  
d. With what substance is the woman drunk, and what does this intoxication suggest?

**The Beast**  
**Revelation 17:6b-8**

**Day 3**

5. a. What do we know about the beast from verse 3?
- b. Describe his relationship with Babylon. vv. 3, 5
6. a. The beast comes from the Abyss. What kind of being is he likely to be? Revelation 9:1-11
- b. In spite of the impression he makes on earth, what will be his ultimate destiny?
- c. How does this give you courage as you see evil escalate in the world around you?

**The Heads and the Horns**  
**Revelation 17:9-14**

**Day 4**

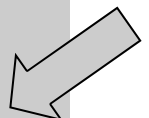
7. What do the seven heads and ten horns of the beast represent?
8. a. What single purpose unites the ten kings? What will that purpose lead them to do?
- b. What will be the outcome of the war?
9. Why will the Lamb win the war and overcome the kings?
10. a. How are the Lamb's followers described?
- b. How has the Lord proven Himself faithful to you in your own difficult circumstances?

**The Woman**  
**Revelation 17:15-18**

**Day 5**

11. a. Why do you think the beast's and kings' attitudes changed toward Babylon?
- b. What is the final explanation and end result of their hatred?
- Proverbs 16:4
- Proverbs 21:1
12. a. What moral and cultural characteristics would you expect to find in a city like Babylon the Great?
- b. Can you think of any cities today that are becoming more like Babylon?
13. How does this chapter help you better understand and trust God's sovereign control over history and the future?

**Live the TRUTH!**



**The vision of the prostitute, an image of godless corruption, is a call for purity and commitment to the Lamb. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27 May you stay pure as the world gets more polluted.**

## Commentary Revelation Lesson 18

The last bowl judgment, in Chapter 16, destroyed the city "Babylon the Great," along with her sister cities. The next two chapters elaborate on the destruction. An angel summons John and offers him a vision of the destruction of Babylon the Great, saying he will show "the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters." She "sits on many waters" means that the prostitute rules or has significant influence over many peoples, nations, and multitudes. The angel explains her sins. First, "the kings of the earth committed adultery": they violated every standard of righteousness and justice to gain her favors. Second, "the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." The whole earth comes under her spell, embracing her decadence and idolatry. John has already explained that Jerusalem is "figuratively called Sodom and Egypt" (11:8), possibly Babylon is a figurative name for this corrupt city.

John says, "The angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert." The scene, a desolate, lifeless wilderness, reflects the empty spiritual nature of the woman he is about to describe. Once in the desert, John sees a woman on a scarlet beast. The color may represent royalty, or be connected with sin as in Isaiah 1:18, "though your sins are like scarlet." Pairing sinfulness with the color scarlet, as opposed to "white as snow," certainly fits this beast.

The blasphemous names covering the beast signify its own claims of deity. It has "seven heads and ten horns," just like the antichrist in 13:1. The numbers seven and ten represent kings of a political alliance. The beast, then, is a multinational political alliance of the last days, and the woman is a city, Babylon the Great, which in some crucial sense rides upon, or controls, this great beastly alliance — for a time.

The woman "was dressed in purple and scarlet." Her sins, scarlet overlaid with purple in their intensity, provide a contrast to the spotless white linen of the saints. The woman "was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls." Her gaudy excess is the exact opposite of the godly modesty and good works the epistles encouraged (1 Timothy 2:9-10). This sinful city seems loaded with material and moral decadence. "Abominable things and the filth of her adulteries" fill her golden cup. This corrupt city drank abominable filth with relish, intoxicating itself with evil. John also mentions the woman's title. The word mystery may or may not be part of the actual title. It does suggest that the name Babylon the Great has a symbolic meaning, and may not be a literal name. The reference to her as "the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth" means that she not only participates in such things herself but gives birth to other forms of them" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### **Check It Out:**

Think about whether your soul has been to Babylon lately. Babylon (called Babel, meaning gateway to a god) is first mentioned in Genesis 11, which records man's rebellious attempts to build a tower to heaven. The project was designed to celebrate man's proud control of the earth rather than to humbly obey God. Babylon's brick towers (ziggurats) were monuments to the pagan idol, Marduk. Prideful Babylon made her own false gods, and so do people today, but the gods have different names — names like "my pleasure," "my wants," "my goals," "my name." God shows what He thinks of this by picturing Babylon as a prostitute. May we examine ourselves to be sure we have no self idols, catering more to Self than to the Savior

"Drunk with the blood of the saints...who bore testimony to Jesus," Babylon the Great kills Christians with abandon. Realizing that John is amazed and "greatly astonished," the angel who had first summoned him offers an explanation. The angel tells John that the beast he saw "once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction." This riddle has posed some difficulty for interpreters. One explanation could be that the beast is in reality a demonic incarnation of a fallen angel who will be released from the Abyss where he is now held, to take on human form as the antichrist, "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Some interpreters, however, suggest a more personal solution, that the "was ... is not ... will come" riddle refers to the mortal head wound that the antichrist suffers, meaning he lived, died, and came back to life (compare 13:3, 14). Still other scholars believe the reviving of the beast in 17:8 refers to his satanic world government once again coming to power as a revived empire. As with every other counterfeit aspect of Satan's kingdom, so also this "was ... is not ... will come" feature is a poor attempt to imitate Christ, the One "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (1:8).

Those on the tribulation earth who are not believers in Christ will be fascinated by the beast. These are the ones whose "names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world" (see Lesson 16 Commentary). The influence of the beast may be part of the strong, end-time delusion God will send on the unrepentant world (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

The angel next turns to the heads and horns on the beast and immediately cautions the reader about the interpretive curves and twists ahead by saying, "This calls for a mind with wisdom." He explains that the seven heads are both seven hills and seven kings. Hills often were symbolic of the kingdom capitals. The reference may simply be to ancient Rome, which was famous for being situated on seven hills. Because the heads/hills are also seven kings, care must be taken to sort out this pattern. The angel then tells John about the ten horns, which are ten individual kings who will reign "along with the beast." The sole purpose of the ten horns is to give their power and authority to the antichrist. They will muster their armies to fight against Christ when He returns in glory at Armageddon.

The angel completes his portion of the vision by explaining the meaning of the woman. The waters she sits on "are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages." She exercises her poisonous influence around the world, defiling people by mere contact with her. But the beast's ten horns/kings will come to hate her — bringing her to ruin. The angel identifies the woman in this vision as a city, one that "rules over the kings of the earth," which in John's day could only be Rome. Which city that will be in the Tribulation remains to be seen, but the future saints living in those days, who are alert to biblical prophecy, will know for certain what city it.



**The vision of Babylon — the harlot on the beast, drunk with the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus — is disturbing. But a few chapters later we make a discovery — a new and wonderful vision begins exactly the same way: "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you'" (21:9) not the harlot but the bride. John sees not the wicked prostitute on a beast but the beautiful Holy City, Jerusalem, radiating God's glory as the cherished bride of the Lamb. The contrast is stark. The outcome is sure. Praise God!**



*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27*

**What do you think you can do in a practical way to obey James 1:27?**