

God's Revelation of the Future

Community Baptist Church
Lesson 10

Adult Bible Fellowship
Fall, 2024

The Destruction of Babylon – 17:1-18:24

There are two visions of Babylon, one in chapter 17 and another in chapter 18. Are these descriptions of two different entities or is this one entity described in two ways? The latter seems the better option. Chapter 17 emphasizes a political aspect. There the relationship between Babylon and the Beast (Antichrist) is in focus. Chapter 18 emphasizes a commercial aspect. There the relationship between Babylon and the kings and merchants of the world is in focus.

Given this political-commercial emphasis, is there any anti-God (religious) aspect of Babylon? The answer is "Yes!" Just as secular societies today are anti-God, so too is this Babylon. However, this "religious" aspect, though mentioned, is not the emphasis in these chapters.

Can we identify this Babylon? Probably not! But certainly, those living during this time will recognize it.

How does Babylon relate to the Beast and his global empire? The Beast hates Babylon. In some sense, Babylon is an obstacle, perhaps the last, to the Beast's complete world domination.

When does Babylon's destruction take place? It seems best to understand the destruction as taking place at some point during the 2nd half of the 70th week since the Beast is Babylon's destroyer.

- In Chapter 17 John is told about "the judgment of the great prostitute," Babylon, namely its destruction. (17:1)
 - That she is "seated on many waters" refers to her global relationships (cf. 17:15).
- Babylon is pictured as a prostitute having relationships with "the kings of the earth." (17:1-2)
 - Babylon is a city. This is figurative language. Those there sold their moral integrity for low or unworthy purposes in transactions with others for economic gains.
- John is then taken to see this woman in her relationship with "a scarlet beast." (17:3)

- She is "sitting on" this beast. The picture seems to be like a horse and rider. That being the case, the beast is "supporting" the woman, but the woman is "in control."
- The woman is dressed in a way that indicates power and glory as well as wealth. (17:4)
- She is identified as "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (17:5)
 - This is apparently God's designation.
- She is "drunk with the blood of the saints." (17:6)
 - This prostitute is opposed to God and his people. As a result, she will kill "the saints," making them "martyrs of Jesus." She "gets high" doing this.
- John saw her and "marveled greatly." No doubt he is astonished by what he sees. (17:6)
 - The angel will explain (17:8-18), starting with the beast and then including the woman.
- This seven-headed beast is associated with the 1st beast of Revelation 13. (17:8)
 - It represents a series of seven empires, culminating in a final one in two forms, regional and global. (17:9)
 - There is a strong relationship between the empires (kingdoms) and their kings, especially the last one. (17:10)
 - The seventh form of a kingdom (regional) will morph into an eighth form (global). (17:11)
 - This transition apparently begins at the middle of the 70th week when the Beast is given global authority.
- There are ten horns associated with this Beast. (17:12-13)
 - These represent yet future "kings" who are given authority by the Beast. Cf. Daniel 2:40-43 and 7:7, 8, 24.
 - These kings "will make war with the Lamb." (17:14)
 - But they will not win!
 - This will take place post-70th week, at Armageddon.
- John is now told the meaning of "the waters" mentioned in 17:1. (17:15)
 - These "waters" represent those around the world who are in a relationship with the prostitute.
- John learns of the hatred of the Beast and ten kings toward the prostitute. (17:16)
 - It is this hatred that will lead them to destroy the woman, i.e., Babylon.

- They will “burn her up with fire.”
- Ultimately, they are carrying out God’s purpose (17:17)
- John is told that the woman is “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”
 - It is this “dominion” that the Beast is destroying.
- In Chapter 18 John sees the destruction that falls on Babylon. (18:1-2)
 - An angel announces that Babylon is being destroyed.
 - The spiritual evil that now dwells there is described.
- Babylon is being destroyed because of her corruption for economic gain as she traded with the nations of the world. (18:3)
- God’s people are to get out and avoid being caught up with the materialism and commercialism permeating Babylon. (18:4-5)
- God’s punishment is “a double portion.” (18:6-7)
 - This is in light of the nature of Babylon’s sin and her boasting.
 - And her destruction will be swift as she is “burned up with fire.” (18:8)
- Those involved with Babylon “will stand far off” lest they be caught up in her destruction. This includes ...
 - The kings of the earth. (18:9-10)
 - The merchants of the earth. (18:11-13, 15-17a)
 - Items of trade are listed.
 - All these things for which she longed are forever gone. (18:14)
 - The seafarers who handled the trade. (18:17b-19)
- An angel addresses the saints saying that they should rejoice over God’s judgment of Babylon. (18:20)
- Another angel provides an object lesson regarding the destruction of Babylon. (18:21)
 - The angel compares it to “a great millstone” thrown “into the sea.”
 - He then lists activities that will no longer take place in Babylon. (18:22-23)
- Babylon’s role in killing God’s children provides additional reason for her judgment. (18:24)

Rejoicing in Heaven – 19:1-10

In the first part of chapter 19 John sees two activities. First, he sees a celebration in heaven of the destruction of Babylon. Second, John hears of an invitation to attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

- “A great multitude” celebrating in heaven declares that God’s “judgments are true and just.” He has destroyed the prostitute Babylon. (19:1-3)
 - In so doing, God “has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”
- This celebration leads to worship by “the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. (19:4-5)
 - An angel responds to their worship calling for yet more praise.
- Subsequently, John hears a “great multitude” declaring “the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.” (19:6)
 - This is similar to the proclamation at the 7th trumpet. (11:15-18)
 - And apparently this is fulfillment of Psalm 2:7-9.
- As part of the celebration, we find not only the Lamb, but also the Lamb’s bride. (19:7-8)
- An angel then proclaims that “those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” are blessed. (19:9)
- John is so overtaken by all that he is seeing that he “loses his mind,” falling down before the angel with the intention of worship. (19:10)
 - But the angel, as a “fellow servant,” tells John not to worship him, but “Worship God.”
 - John adds that “the testimony of Jesus,” i.e., truth centered on who the Son is and what he is doing, is “the spirit of prophecy,” the central theme of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. (MacArthur)

Note: All references are to the book of Revelation unless otherwise specified.