

sermon study summary

Revelation Part 21 – The End of False Religion

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Revelation 17 and 18 present the symbolic fall of "Babylon," representing the world's resistance against Christ and God's authority. In these chapters, Babylon embodies the collective defiance and idolatry found within both religious and secular spheres. John describes a harlot sitting on a scarlet beast (v.1-3), where the harlot represents the religious system of Babylon—a global structure of spiritual apostasy and idolatry. Her role as a "harlot" reflects her seduction of powerful leaders and multitudes, persuading them to abandon God's truth and adopt her counterfeit religion.

The scarlet beast, meanwhile, symbolizes political and economic powers aligned with Satanic influence, with scarlet red underscoring sin and Satan himself. The beast has seven heads and ten horns: symbols of its authority and power. In verse 9, these seven heads represent seven historical empires—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and an anticipated future global kingdom of the Antichrist. This future empire will stand in ultimate opposition to God, gathering worldwide support to establish a temporary, godless rule.

Verses 12-13 mention ten kings, though they do not yet possess a kingdom. They will receive authority alongside the beast, but only for a limited time ("one hour"), and will unite in purpose to fulfill the Antichrist's agenda. Despite this formidable alliance, the final battle will be brief, as Christ triumphs as "Lord of lords and King of kings" (v.14), defeating the forces of evil effortlessly.

In verse 6, Babylon's religious system is exposed as fiercely anti-God, embracing any ideology but becoming increasingly hostile to true followers of Christ. It will tolerate all views except those who maintain biblical convictions, even to the point of martyring believers. This intense rejection of God's truth Babylon's followers underscores the depth of rebellion and the need for divine justice, as God will ultimately vindicate His people.

Do we see the false religion of Babylon in our culture and the church today?

From the beginning, Satan has tempted Christ's followers by challenging God's truth, authority, and goodness (Genesis 3). He fuels division through political, racial, and ideological conflicts, corrupts education and culture by undermining the family, and promotes consumerism, materialism, and self-interest. Attacks on the sanctity of life appear in abortion and euthanasia, and Christian churches are portrayed as outdated and intolerant, pressuring leaders to compromise on core beliefs, values, and godly living.

In the West, tolerance is highly valued, traditionally meaning respect for others' beliefs without needing to agree. However, "positive tolerance" now implies that all beliefs, values, and lifestyles are equally valid, with no one truth seen as superior. Under this view, claiming a particular truth, way to God, or Biblical lifestyle as exclusive creates a hierarchy, which the prevailing culture of Babylon deems intolerant.

What does all this mean for us today?

1. We need to ask ourselves where in our lives are we being influenced by the religion of Babylon (1 John 2:15). Far too many Christians are living just like the world is living.
2. We must commit ourselves to knowing the truth and obeying the truth of God's Word. You must decide between the Word of God and the world.
3. Remember that God is in control. Revelation 17:14 says, "...**the Lamb will triumph over them because HE IS LORD OF LORDS and King of Kings and with Him will be HIS CALLED, CHOSEN and faithful followers!!**"

THE WORD (NIV)

Revelation 17:1-18

17 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ²With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

³Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF
PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE
ABOMINATIONS OF
THE EARTH.

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sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is your favourite city? What nickname or defining word would you give it?
2. What would you hope to emulate from Christians in countries that are under severe persecution?

UP – PURSUE GOD

3. Read 1 John 2:15-17 and Rev 17:1-14. What are the characteristics of the love of the world? How are they flaunted in Revelation 17? What does it mean to “not love the world”?
4. Read Genesis 3:1-6 and 11:1-4. What can we learn from these passages that help make sense of the events of Revelation 17 and the way our culture thinks today?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. When or where are you in the greatest danger of embracing the patterns of the world, the “religion of Babylon”? When do you recognize it? Share your strategies for combatting this cultural invasion.
6. Christianity is increasingly counter-cultural with growing pushback. How can we prepare ourselves to stand strong through persecution? How can Rev 17:14 give you the confidence to live victoriously and spread the Gospel individually and with your community group?

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

***Where do you look for your source of truth and guidance?
What topics guide your prayer and thought life? Ask the Spirit to refocus your walk with Christ, readjust your priorities, and absorb more truth from God’s Word.***

THE WORD (NIV)

Revelation 17:1-18 cont...

⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷ Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸ The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

¹² “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶ The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. ¹⁸ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

1 John 2:15-17

Genesis 3:1-6; 11:1-4

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