

REVELATION

Spiritual Babylon
(Revelation 17:1~6)

Revelation 14:8: Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

*Revelation 16:19: The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her **drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.***

Why is there this focus on Babylon?

Revelation 17: “spiritual Babylon”

Revelation 18: “economic Babylon”



Revelation 17:1-6: Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and

I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

We see the sinful and destructive nature of this woman, but we are also reminded to be encouraged and faithful in our own walk with God.

We must seek God's help to grow in purity in our lives.

1. The nature of Revelation 17-18

❖ These chapters focus more on *what* is destroyed than *how* it is destroyed.

A. These chapters do not give us every detail that we might like to know.

❖ They contain much symbolism and figures of speech.

❖ The symbols have specific reference points: both the woman and the beast represent *something* specific.

❖ We can make careful observations and draw tentative conclusions, but we don't know every detail.

1. The nature of Revelation 17-18

B. Revelation 17-18 gives us a trajectory of what will happen in the future.

- ❖ The goal of giving us the big picture of the future is so that we know better how to live our lives today.
- ❖ In Genesis 15, God established an unconditional covenant with Abraham.

*Genesis 15:13-16: Then the LORD said to Abram,
“Know for certain that your offspring will be
sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be
servants there, and they will be afflicted for four
hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the
nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come
out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to
your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old
age. And they shall come back here in the fourth
generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet
complete.”*

1. The nature of Revelation 17-18

B. Revelation 17-18 gives us a trajectory of what will happen in the future.

- ❖ Abraham knew his family would be oppressed in a foreign land and then God would deliver them.
- ❖ Abraham did *not* know Joseph would be a leader or that there would be a plague of frogs and plague of darkness and that the Red Sea would part.
- ❖ Hebrews 11 commends Abraham's faith for looking ahead to heavenly promises.

1. The nature of Revelation 17-18

C. These chapters are a parenthesis within the main storyline of Revelation.

- ❖ They step outside the play-by-play events and judgments of the Tribulation.
- ❖ Different events in Revelation 17-18 can fit into different parts of the Tribulation.

1. The nature of Revelation 17-18

D. The impure woman in Revelation 17 contrasts with the pure bride in Revelation 19.

- ❖ Revelation 19 speaks of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and how the bride of the Lamb is ready.
- ❖ Ephesians 5 says Christ's goal for the church is to have a pure and blameless bride.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

❖ Revelation 17:1-6: Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness,

and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

A. This woman seems to be a false religion that rejects God.

❖ How does the passage point to a false religion? How is immorality a picture of false religion?



2. The woman of Revelation 17

A. This woman seems to be a false religion that rejects God.

- ❖ The contrast between the impure woman and the pure bride
- ❖ Prostitution and immorality are often a picture of false religion in Scripture.
 - ❖ Many pagan religions literally included immorality as part of their “worship.”
 - ❖ Israel and Judah often committed spiritual “adultery.”

2. The woman of Revelation 17

A. This woman seems to be a false religion that rejects God.

❖ In a figurative sense, the Jews were “married” to the true God, but often committed “adultery” by following other false gods (Hosea, 2 Chronicles 21, Psalm 106, Isaiah 1, Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 23).

2. The woman of Revelation 17

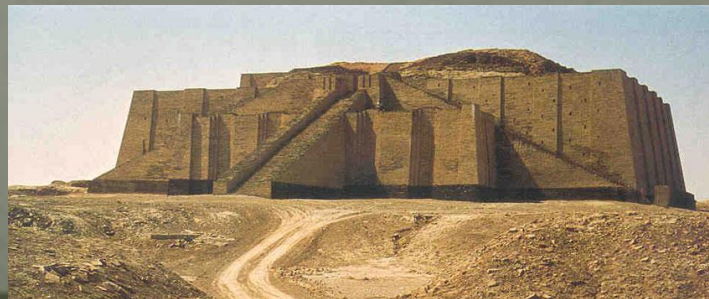
B. The woman is said to be the source of much abomination and evil.

- ❖ Revelation 17:5: And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.”
- ❖ “Mother” pictures the source of abominations.
- ❖ Historically, many pagan religions are sourced in ancient Babylon.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

B. The woman is said to be the source of much abomination and evil.

- ❖ The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 says that Nimrod ruled Babel in the land of Shinar and expanded his kingdom to Assyria and founded Nineveh.
- ❖ Genesis 11 records the Tower of Babel, when the people tried to reject God's command to scatter and fill the earth.



2. The woman of Revelation 17

B. The woman is said to be the source of much abomination and evil.

- ❖ Babylonian records say that Nimrod had a wife named Semiramis and a son named Tammuz, who was considered a savior of the people.
- ❖ Beliefs and practices from Babel are seen in several pagan religions.
- ❖ Greek and Roman mythology both use the Babylonian zodiac.
- ❖ The ancient religions of Babylon have “given birth” to much false religion.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

C. This woman leads many astray during the Tribulation.

- ❖ Revelation 17:2: With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.
- ❖ The woman has led them into immorality, which seems to be a picture of false religion.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

C. This woman leads many astray during the Tribulation.

- ❖ Revelation 17:4: The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.
- ❖ Her clothing and jewelry indicate success in her trade.

2. The woman of Revelation 17

C. This woman leads many astray during the Tribulation.

- ❖ Apart from true believers whom she persecutes, she is successful at leading the people of the earth astray.
- ❖ Some see this religion as centered in Babylon or in Rome, but the passage does not give the details of what the false religion is like.
- ❖ The main point is that the woman is judged for leading many astray.

3. The woman is supported by the beast.

- ❖ Revelation 17:3: And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.
- ❖ Where else in Revelation is there a beast with blasphemies, seven heads, and ten horns?

3. The woman is supported by the beast.

- ❖ This beast and his kingdom are described more in the angel's explanation later in the chapter.
- ❖ In Revelation 13, the beast makes war on the saints, and in Revelation 17, the woman is drunk on the blood of the saints.
- ❖ The woman works in unity with the Antichrist and his kingdom.

Conclusion: What do we do with what God has revealed?

- How does Revelation 17:1-6 affect us this week?
- Ephesians 5:25-27: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **that he might sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Conclusion: What do we do with what God has revealed?

- Many ancient religions were immoral in their “worship.”
- We live in a very immoral culture that celebrates and promotes immorality.
- God’s grace can forgive our sins, but what are we aiming for today? Are we drifting with culture, or are we aiming for purity?
- We must seek God’s help to grow in purity in our lives.

NEXT TIME:

REVELATION 17:7-18

- The Fall of
Spiritual Babylon