

## The Rise and Fall of Babylon (Part 2) – Rev 17-18

Rev 17. We're in the middle of a miniseries in our study of Revelation about the *culture* we should expect in The Great Tribulation. A culture the Apostle John calls the great prostitute or *Babylon the Great*.

And so far, we found that . . .

The great prostitute is Babylon the Great. (v1,5,18)

- Don't be confused.

Both represent a worldwide culture of debauchery, luxury, and persecution. (v2,6)

- A culture that's already started.

- Don't be naïve.

And in The Great Tribulation . . .

The Antichrist will use the prostitute to influence the world. (v2-4)

He'll use the culture of power and pleasure to *subjugate* the world.

- Don't be surprised.

Don't be confused, don't be naïve, and don't be surprised. That was v1-6.

But there's one more truth in v6 we can't afford to miss.

**The combination of power and pleasure will be deadly for believers.** (v6)

After seeing the great prostitute indulging with the world and the beast in v1-5, John says in v6 – *And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus* [the witnesses to Jesus]. (ESV)

Quite the graphic vision. And the result of a deadly combination. Power from the Antichrist and pleasure from the prostitute. One to overwhelm by force, and the other to overcome with temptation. Both leading to so much death, that the great prostitute will be *drunk* on it. Delirious with it. Heady.

We saw the *power* part of that *last* week. Under the label of persecution. Where the hatred of the culture and the power of the Antichrist will lead to death for many believers.

But that's only part of the combination. The other part is the deadly effect of sexual immorality itself. Made clear in passages like **Prov 5**. Where Solomons says, incline your ear – [3] *For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, [4] but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. [5] Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol* [the grave]. Sexual immorality itself leads to death.

And **Prov 7** says, regarding a man who entertains it – [21] *With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. [22] All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter. . . he does not know that it will cost him his life.* Indulging in sexual pleasure outside of marriage, or *apart* from marriage, is deadly. Right now.

But in The Great Tribulation it's going to be even worse. When it's combined with the abusive power of the Antichrist and a widespread culture of debauchery. A culture that won't take lightly the guilt they feel because of your purity.

It's a deadly combination. Physically deadly, emotionally deadly, and spiritually deadly.

- Don't be fooled.

Don't think that you can play with fire and not get burned.

Don't think you can reject the culture and avoid the carnage. Don't think you can resist the beast and not get devoured. The great prostitute will be *drunk* with our blood it says.

But you can at least avoid the *spiritual* death. The most important death. The slow death of indulging your flesh. That's a fight you *can* win. Then *and* now. And if you *don't* win it now, you probably won't win it then. When things are even worse.

If you're struggling with that, get help. There's no shame in getting help. Say something to your small group leader; or Bible study group. Mention it to one of our pastors. Call the church office. Make a note on the Connection Card, "Can someone call me?" It's that simple.

From marriage mentoring and Biblical Soul Care to Freedom Groups and intensives, we have multiple ways to help. With all the grace and truth to go along. But you have to ask. You have to realize how deadly it is. Don't be fooled.

➤ Next, John hears from the *angel* in his vision. V6b.

[6b] *When I saw her* [John says; referring to the great prostitute], *I marveled greatly. [7] But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? [Why do you stand in awe? Why are you filled with amazement?] I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.* And then he starts with the beast.

[8] *The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.*

In The Great Tribulation . . .

**The Antichrist will rise like Babylon and amaze the world (v7-8)**

We've seen it before (ch13) and we'll see it again. He'll rise out of nowhere, in the chaos of The Great Tribulation; he'll suffer some sort of setback that removes him from the scene; and then he'll bounce back. He'll rise, he'll fall, and he'll rise again.

V8 again. *The beast that you saw was* [he came out of nowhere and burst on the scene], *and is not* [he's no longer on the scene], *and is about to rise* [about to come back] *from the bottomless pit* [the source of evil and darkness]. Nothing short of amazing.

But in v7, John doesn't know that. Or doesn't remember it. The only thing that occupies his attention is the prostitute. Causing him to marvel. *When I saw her* [he said], *I marveled greatly.* (6b) And the angel says, "Uh-uh. Don't do that."

*Why do you marvel?* he asks. (7) A rhetorical question, to say that only those without the power of discernment do that. Only those without the mind of Christ. Only those, v8b – *whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.* Those whom God hasn't chosen, and haven't chosen him. *They marvel, they're amazed* the angel says, but you shouldn't be. *We* shouldn't be.

*We have* been chosen. By grace through faith we're *saved*. We're indwelt. Which means we should be *wise* to the things of the world. We should know better.

• **Don't be deceived.**

That's the point. The Antichrist will come out of nowhere and amaze the *world*, but he shouldn't amaze us. We ought to see him for what he is. A fake. A sham. Someone who's going to fall just as quickly as he rose. *The beast that you saw* [v8] . . . *is about to rise . . . and go to destruction*. He's a fake, and he's temporary. Don't be deceived.

When you see a world leader burst on the scene, suffer a major setback, and then re-ascend, do not marvel and do not follow.

➤ Then, in v9, the angel *further* explains the mystery of all this. Saying . . .  
[9] *This calls for a mind with wisdom* [you think?]: *the seven heads* [from v3; the seven heads of the beast, the Antichrist] *are seven mountains on which the woman is seated*;  
[10] *they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while*. [11] *As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction*. It's like a riddle in an escape room. What in the world?

[12] *And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast*. [13] *These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast*. [14] *They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*”

V14 is the bottom line of the entire section. The entire Tribulation for that matter.

**The world will pick a fight they can't win. (v9-14)**

V14 – *They will make war on the Lamb* [they'll pick a fight with *Jesus*, these kings of the world in cahoots with the Antichrist], *and the Lamb will conquer them* [he'll win], *for he is Lord of lords and King of kings* [almighty and unbeatable], *and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*”

In other words, we're his. Called by God, chosen by God, and faithful to God. As precious to him as it gets. So of course *Jesus* is going to protect us and win. *I give them eternal life* [he said], *and they will never perish* (Jn 10:28). We may die. We may be killed. But that's not perishing. That's gain. Dying is *gain* the Bible says (Phil 1:21). Because it's the gateway to heaven.

So the world can't win on *two* counts. The Lamb is Lord, and the sheep are precious. The Lamb is Lord because no one is greater. *Jesus* is king and rules overall. End of story.

And the sheep are precious because he loves us. Red, brown, yellow, black, and white we are precious in his sight. Loved by him. Preserved and protected by him. All of which means the world will pick a fight they can't win. V14 is clear.

➤ V9-13 not so much. But let's see if we can sort them out. When the angel says in v9 – *The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated*; it's most likely a 1<sup>st</sup> century reference to the 7 hills of Rome. Representing 7 kingdoms of the empire.

But *they are also* [the angel says in v10] *seven kings* [they're kingdoms *and* kings, these 7 heads of the beast in his vision], *five of whom have fallen* [no longer in existence], *one is* [the 6<sup>th</sup>] *the other has not yet come* [the 7<sup>th</sup>], *and when he does come he must remain only*

*a little while*. [11] *As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth* [an 8<sup>th</sup> king] *but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction*.

To sort that out, you first have to realize that he's mixing metaphors. On the one hand, the beast *itself* has 7 heads, and on the other, only *one* of those heads is the beast. And an eighth at that. Two metaphors to describe the same thing. The Antichrist.

If you realize that, and keep in mind his veiled reference to ancient Rome, I think the best conclusion is this: The *seven heads* in v9, are kings and kingdoms like those of ancient Rome, who represent a *perfect consortium* of worldwide leaders in The Great Tribulation, from whom the Antichrist comes. A perfect consortium of 7.

*And the ten horns that you saw* [v12] *are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast*. [13] *These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast*.

Whereas the 7 heads represent a *perfect* group, the 10 horns represent a *complete* group. A complete group of world leaders, who rule as puppets or proxies of the Antichrist for a very short time, *one hour*, and wage war on *Jesus* by waging war on the church. Those are the 10 horns.

Just like Daniel said in his *Old Testament* prophecy about all this. He too spoke of 10 horns (Dan 7:24). And a world leader who would prevail over the saints until *one like a Son of Man* comes (Dan 7:13). **Dan 7:25-27**.

[25] *He shall speak words against the Most High* [the Antichrist will], *and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law* [the culture and the government]; *and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time* [probably 3½ years].

[26] *But the court shall sit in judgment* [the royal court of heaven], *and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end*. [27] *And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*'

What Daniel saw 600 years before Christ, John sees 60 years after Christ. To assure us that it's true. That *Jesus* will return, and *Jesus* will *win*. He hasn't forgotten. He hasn't abandoned us. A truth that will be all the more precious in The Great Tribulation, when the world picks a fight.

So whatever you do . . .

• **Don't be afraid.**

Will we *walk through the valley of the shadow of death*? Absolutely. Need we fear any evil? Absolutely not. *For you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me*. (Ps 23:4) The rod and staff of the King of kings and Lord of lords. *Our* King and *our* Lord. The one who called us and chose us. The one who's with us and loves us.

Afraid? Of what?

To feel the spirit's glad release?

To pass from pain to perfect peace,  
The strife and strain of life to cease?  
Afraid? Of that?

It's a poem written by E.H. Hamilton to commemorate the death of **J.W. Vinson** in 1931. Vinson was a missionary in China who lost his life to an armed group of bandits. And just before they killed him, they taunted him with a question. "Are you afraid." "No," he replied. "If you shoot, I go straight to heaven."

Afraid? Of what?  
To do by death what life could not –  
Baptize with blood a stony plot,  
Till souls shall blossom from the spot?  
Afraid? Of that?

Will we suffer losses in The Great Tribulation? Absolutely. Should we be afraid? Absolutely not. (**Summary**) It's a fight we can't lose, and the world can't win.

And in the midst of all that . . .

**The Antichrist will turn on the prostitute and destroy her. (v15-18)**

*[15] And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw [in v1], where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages [the whole world]. [16] And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. Like a man uses a woman he doesn't love, and then hates her for it. Same idea. In the end she is bitter as wormwood (Prov 5:4).*

The world leaders *and the beast will hate the prostitute*; and what's worse – *[16b] They will make her desolate and naked [powerless and exposed], and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, [17] for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. [18] And the woman that you saw is the great city [Babylon] that has dominion over the kings of the earth."*

At some point near the end of The Great Tribulation, the powers that be will turn on the culture of debauchery, luxury, and persecution; and destroy it. They'll turn on those who perpetuated and pushed it, and kill them. *Devour [their] flesh and burn [them] up with fire (16b).*

All because they hate her, and it's God's will. God's *purpose*, v17. He'll put it in their hearts *to carry out* his punishment just like he said. Babylon will *drain the cup . . . of the fury of his wrath* (16:19). *The wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger* (14:10). God said it, and sinful men will do it.

• **Don't be shocked.**

Don't be shocked at the means, and don't be shocked at the result. The means, in that God will put into their hearts the very thing they *want* to do. Kill and destroy. And don't be shocked at the result, because the wages of sin, is *always* death.

4 truths about the days to come, and four responses to hold fast.

Prayer – God, give us wisdom and insight that we might not be fooled or deceived. Give us hearts that trust, that we might not fear. And etch these truths on our soul, that we might not be shocked.

**You Are Loved**