

Recap

Heaven (4:1–5:14)

Earth: the opening of the first six seals describe a *panoramic view of human history* in the judgments of God upon the world during the time between Jesus' ascending to heaven and returning to earth (6:1–17)

*Second Coming (6:12–17)

Heaven: pause of this history before the seventh seal is opened and shows God's sealing his people for salvation (7:1–8:4)

*Second Coming (8:5)

Earth: the sounding of the first six trumpets, which again describe a *panoramic view of human history* by announcing the judgments of God upon the world and upon the unbelieving in the world (8:6–9:21)

Chapters 10–11 pauses this history again.

When the seventh trumpet sounds **there would be no more delay of God's vindication of his martyred church and the mystery of God would be fulfilled** (10:6–7).

Like Ezekiel, John eats the scroll of the Lord's will for human history, but it's bitter in his stomach (10:9) as he was to **prophesy** of judgment on **many peoples and nations and languages and kings** (10:11). More importantly, it's bitter as while the church is sealed from God's eternal wrath (ch. 7) it experiences the wrath of Satanically-inspired nations.

*Second Coming (11:19).

Chapters 12–14 act like a pair of night vision binoculars as we look at the people & institutions that make up our world with a glimpse of clarity.

Chap. 12 showed the reality behind Jesus' life & ours as his church. The Dragon (Satan) couldn't hinder the Son's bringing salvation to the world so turned its attention to the Son's mother (church). It couldn't hinder her so it wars against the sons and daughters of the church—you and I.

Chap. 13 showed two more beasts—one from the sea (persecuting government) & one from the earth beast (false religion). These are an *unholy Trinity*.

Chap. 14–15:4 showed how the saints can endure the beasts with confidence in a vision of final victory.

Intro

Imagine life as a fish. You live in water. You see in water. You breathe oxygen in the water. Your food comes from the water. All you know is water. Then you get taken out. What do you notice? Just how much your life was defined by water!

The world we live in is like water. You and I are the fish. When we come to Jesus it's like we're taken out and shown just how much we depended on the water before. One of the constant exhortations of Scripture is being aware that we get saturated by the world and that we need to repent of that saturation. I want to begin at the end with the purpose of this highly symbolic passage for us: Jesus calls out to you and I to be on guard against the influence of the world in our lives. The world we live in is personified in Revelation 17 as an immoral woman. Like the "forbidden woman" of the Proverbs, the world whispers and entices with smooth words that seem to taste like honey, only to be sharp and bitter in the end (Prov. 5:3–4). You and I have to be on guard constant by the enticements of our society. "If I only take on this one extra project, work from home at night, then I'll get noticed, get a raise, get a promotion, and be happy."

Our Theme. Revelation 17:1–18 calls us to be on guard against the influence of the world with a vision of God's judgment on the great prostitute Babylon, which 14:8 and 16:19 foreshadowed.

I. Her Identity

I.1. It's called **the great prostitute** (v. 1)

I.1.1. Personification.

I.1.2. Reminds us of whom she isn't. She isn't the woman of chapter 12, who gave birth to Jesus and who gave birth to us. Babylon isn't the church, which Paul calls "our mother" (Gal. 4:26).

I.1.3. Chapters 17–19 contrasts Lady Babylon with Lady Jerusalem, the bride of Christ (chapter 21). These two sections (chapters 17–19 & chapter 21) each refer to **one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls** (17:1; 21:9) and each say this angel spoke to John, saying, **Come, I will show you** (17:2; 21:9).

I.1.4. What is Babylon in Scripture? An enemy of God's people. All the way back in Genesis 11 where a great civilization gathered to build a Tower

of Babel, or Babylon, to reach heaven and make its own name in opposition to God. Babylon was an enemy in the time that it assaulted God's people Israel and took them captive (e.g., Isa. 13–14; 21; 46–48; Jer. 25; 50–51; Ezek. 27; Dan. 2, 4:30; 7; Hab. 3).

Conclusion: Babylon is the fallen world in which we live that stands in opposition to God. We saw in chapter 13 two beasts—the beast from the sea that was symbolic of ungodly, persecuting government and the beast from the earth that was symbolic of idolatry and false worship. These two beasts are now brought together in this one image of Babylon—the world that we are in but not of, as Jesus says in John 17

2. Her Influence

Objection: “Well that’s interesting, but I’m a Christian; I left the world and entered Christ’s kingdom; I only listen to Christian music, read Christian books, and hang out with Christians.” If it were only that simple! Teenagers know it’s not this simple. You hear about movies and music that others mention and you feel embarrassed that you haven’t heard of them; you hear others use words and they seem so cool so you are tempted to use the same words. We have to live in the world God made and that we as sinners pollute. Part of living in the world is recognizing the *influence* of the world.

2.1. Lady Babylon is **seated on many waters** (v. 1)

2.1.1. OT: “waters” symbolize those who stand opposed to God and his people

2.1.2. Jesus interprets for us that **the waters** are symbolic of **peoples and multitudes and nations and languages** (v. 15); **the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth** (v. 18). Her influence is worldwide. There is no square inch on earth where her influence isn’t felt and found.

2.1.2.1. 1st c.: this influence was over the world through the Roman Empire, of which John refers when he speaks of **the seven heads** of the beast being **seven mountains on which the woman is seated** (v. 9). Rome was the city that was known for sitting on seven hills (*urbs septicolis*), but since horns are symbolic of power, Rome was just the latest incarnation of this ungodly influence

Application: Are you hot and bothered spiritually by world’s agenda as it relates to marriage and human sexuality? “Yes, *that’s* the world’s influence!” But aren’t *you and*

Influenced by the world in our views and practices, too? Isn't divorce prevalent in the church as in the culture? Why do we need good authors to write books on how to be a good husband and how to be a good wife? Because we don't have it all figured out just because we're Christians. How many of us men are influenced by pornography in our views of sex? How many of you women think about love as novels, as reality TV, and as your favorite music on Jack FM have taught you? You and I are like fish. We don't even realize how saturated by the world we really are! Let's work on the log in our own eyes before trying to pick at specks in someone else's.

3. Her Inspiration

Application: “But it's just my favorite Sunday evening show; it's just music; it's just a little attitude I put on for show to have fun.” Here is where you need to dig deeper. We're not called by Christ to retreat into a cloister or monastery to get away from the influence of the world. We're called by Christ to be in the world but not of it; to be its light because the world is a dark place; and to recognize that behind all the world's “boasted pomp and show”—as the hymn writer called it—is Satan.

3.1. **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 (v. 3)**

3.1.1. Where have we read about a red beast? (12:3—the red dragon as symbol of Satan).

3.1.2. Where have we read about a beast with seven heads and ten horns? (13:1—the sea beast that led people to worship the dragon)

3.1.3. The inspiration behind the world's anti-Christ, anti-Christian agenda is Satan, that ancient foe of God and his people

3.2. The angel interprets the meaning of the beast: **The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction (vv. 7–8)**

3.2.1. Where have we read this “was, is, and is to come” pattern? Earlier of Jesus, who died, who rose again, and who is alive forevermore (1:17). Then of Satan in his beast of persecuting power who mimics the Lord (13:3)

4. Her Invitation

Her influence over the world in general is also an *invitation* to you in particular.

- 4.1. **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 (v. 4)**
- 4.1.1. What does this description make you think? She's outwardly beautiful and alluring. She's a beautiful woman decked out in royal garb of purple. She's also decked out in the garb of a prostitute, which scarlet dresses and golden jewelry symbolized (Jer. 4:30).
- 4.2. **She's so attractive, in fact, that with her the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk (v. 2)**
- 4.2.1. Sexual immorality is not merely immorality, but is symbolic of idolatry because like a husband who cheats on his wife, when we serve our own interests because of the world's invitation to do so, we worship ourselves and not the Lord; that's idolatry.

Application: After twenty-one years in the ministry, I can safely say that the Devil is alive and well in the world and in our lives.

1. He uses the world to allure us with the promise of money and success and so the world more and more crowds out our Lord's Day with work.
2. He uses the world to seduce us with the things that bring us personal pleasure. You may not think this, but every time you take a vacation and don't worship, every time you skip church for a company event, a family event, an outing with a friend, or doing your favorite pastime, this chips away at your faith; it chips away at your relationship with Christ and his people.
3. All this makes it that much easier to do it again the next time you're asked or are feeling selfish to skip public worship.
4. Like the harlot of Proverbs, the world uses enticing speech, alluring adornment, and the seemingly fool proof plan that says you can have your fill at night and go on your merry way before anyone sees. The world is inviting you to experience its treasures now; Christ in public worship is calling you to lay up treasures in heaven. Which will you prioritize?

Conclusion: Are you sick of your sin? Disgusted with how weak your light is shining? Sorry for your lack of devotion to Christ because of the comforts of culture? Then cry out, "Maranatha, come quickly Lord!" We see the promise of the end of the world's influence, inspiration, and invitation at the coming of our Lord: **and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings.** We see that promise to us who languish now in our struggles against the world: **and those with him are called chosen and faithful (v. 14).**