

The Book of Revelation

25. The Destruction of Babylon



Revelation 17 - 18

Introduction

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, Satan usurped the right that God had given man to rule the earth. Genesis 1:26. From that time on Satan has ruled over the kingdoms of the world. During the final years of this age, Satan will know that his time is short, and there will be tremendous conflict on earth. However his fall and the complete destruction of his kingdom are foretold in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 14:8 an angel announces its' fall, and we now read about it in more detail in chapters 17 and 18.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 17:1 – 18:24



In this vision the apostle John sees a 'beast'. This is the same 'beast' that we read about in chapter 13. What can you learn about this 'beast' from Revelation 17:3, 9-11? Look carefully to find the meaning of the 7 heads in v9-10 and the 10 horns in v12-13.

(Many Bible scholars believe that this 'beast' with 7 heads is a picture of the great Gentile empires that have ruled over the earth throughout human history. Each of these was led by powerful kings who represent heads. We have been told that 5 of these have fallen, and from the Bible and other historical records we know these were: the Egyptian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Persian and Greek Empires. The one that existed at the time of Jesus and John was the Roman Empire. The coming of Jesus Christ put a death blow to this empire, but we are told that at the end of this age God will allow it to be restored for his purposes for a short time. Some believe we have seen the beginnings of this take place in 1957 when 'The Treaty of Rome' was initiated and the European community began to come together. This is one possibility, but there are many other suggestions, and we will not spend time examining them all in this study.)



Riding upon this 'beast' is a woman, called 'the great prostitute or harlot'. What can you learn from the following verses about this wicked woman? What do you think this represents? Revelation 17:1-6, 15, 18, 18:24

(This wicked woman is an amalgamation of all religions that worship anything or anyone other than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. She represents all false worship, idolatry and witchcraft, and is the counterfeit of true worship. From the name written on the woman we know that it has been in existence since the time of ancient Babylon, which had its' beginnings in the tower of Babel.)



Why do you think false worship is described as adultery or prostitution? Revelation 17:4. What is the meaning of abominations (or detestable things)? See Jeremiah 3:20, 3:9; Deuteronomy 7:25, 26
What sins has this woman been responsible for? Revelation 17:2, 6; 18:3, 7, 23-24

(In the time when the great Gentile empires ruled the world, their kings and rulers gained power and wealth by worshipping false gods, and particularly through witchcraft. Although witchcraft has existed all through the ages, there is a rapid rise in it all over the world, which will climax during the reign of this 'beast' as we see in Revelation 18:2.)



The 'beast' has supported this prostitute, but we see later that he attacks and destroys her. Why do you think the 'beast' hates the prostitute? Revelation 17:16-18, 13:12, 2 Thessalonians 2:4



There is a warning given to God's people – that is not just for a future time, but for today. Read Revelation 18:4. In what ways are many of the people of God entangled in these worldly systems? Discuss.

We have discovered that the vision of the woman riding on the 'beast' represents the worldly systems of religion and commerce that control this present age. God has already declared that they will be destroyed, and He will establish His Kingdom that will rule forever. Hallelujah! And so God warns His people to 'come out of her'.



What will be the response of those who love the things of this world when this happens? Revelation 18:9, 11, 14-15, 19. One of the greatest challenges we have is to be 'in the world' but not 'of the world'. Why is this so difficult? What steps do we constantly need to take to make sure that we are not drawn back into the world? Discuss.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the book of Revelation we are told that we will be blessed if we study this book. When we read the Gospels we see Jesus as our Savior, but when we read Revelation we see Him as King. This book gives us hope and encouragement to continue following the Lord, even when we face the temptation to go back to the world. Remember Jesus is praying for us: *"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."* John 17:15-16