

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 17 (PART 1)

THIS ONE IS A DOOZY. LIKE WE DID WITH REVELATION 16, WE'RE GOING TO READ THROUGH THE CHAPTER AND TRY AND GET A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF WHAT IS BEING COMMUNICATED FIRST, AND THEN SPEND SOME ADDITIONAL TIME TO PARSE THROUGH THE SYMBOLS AND THE DEEPER MEANING. BUT WE WANT TO GET SOME CLARITY ON WHAT JOHN NOW SEES. THIS VISION IS STRANGE, SO WE WILL NOT RUSH THROUGH.

PART OF THE FINAL/SEVENTH BOWL OF WRATH FROM THE LAST CHAPTER WAS POURED OUT UPON "BABYLON". (16:17-21). CHAPTER 17 OPENS WITH A CONNECTION TO THE LAST CHAPTER BECAUSE IT IS GOING TO FOCUS ON "BABYLON". THE NEXT FEW CHAPTERS ARE GOING TO FOCUS ON THE JUDGMENT UPON AND THE "FALL" OF BABYLON. WE WILL SEE THIS SAME THEME FROM A FEW DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES. THE ESV STUDY BIBLE BREAKS IT DOWN LIKE THIS: "A SERIES OF VOICES COMMENT ON HER FALL—FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HEAVEN (18:1—8), THROUGH EARTHLY LAMENTS (18:9—19), AND AGAIN FROM HEAVEN'S VIEWPOINT (18:20—19:10)."

AS WE WILL DISCOVER, THE WOMAN DESCRIBED IN THIS CHAPTER IS REPRESENTATIVE OF BABYLON. WE ALREADY HAVE LEARNED THAT BABYLON WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EVIL HUMAN SYSTEM OF AUTHORITY UPON THE EARTH. IN A SENSE, THIS CHAPTER WILL DESCRIBE WHO SHE REALLY IS. SHE WILL BE DESCRIBED AS A DRUNK PROSTITUTE/HARLOT, MAKING OTHERS GET DRUNK WITH HER. SHE IS PROVOCATIVELY AND EXPENSIVELY DRESSED. SHE IS NOT JUST DRUNK WITH ALCOHOL, SHE IS DRUNK OFF THE BLOOD OF GOD'S PEOPLE. THIS IS ALL EPITOME OF SIN AND WICKEDNESS.

REVELATION 17:1-7 - SEEING THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE?

V. 1-2 - JOHN IS BEING SHOWN THE "JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT" WITH WHOM THE KINGS OF THE EARTH COMMITTED ACTS OF IMMORALITY AND THOSE WHO JOINED IN HER IMMORALITY. ON THE HEELS OF THE WRATH OF GOD DESCRIBED, WE ARE SEEING AN ADDITIONAL PICTURE OF THE JUDGMENT OF GOD UPON THE EARTH.

V. 3 - THE ANGEL TOOK ME INTO THE WILDERNESS. THERE ARE FEW COMMENTARY THOUGHTS ON WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN BUT FOR OUR PURPOSES FIRST, IT SPEAKS THAT JOHN IS BEING TRANSPORTED IN THE SPIRIT TO A NEW PLACE/SCENE WHERE HE IS GETTING THIS VISION.

REVELATION 17:8-14 - THE BEAST: HORNS & HEADS

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE?

THE MAIN MEANING OF THE HEADS AND HORNS RELATE TO KINGDOMS AND KINGS. WE SEE THAT THEIR PURPOSE IS FOR THEIR OWN POWER AND A CULMINATION IN UNITED AGAINST THE LAMB. WE FORESHADOWED THIS IN REVELATION 16 AND OUR DISCUSSION OF THE "KINGS OF THE WHOLE WORLD" COMING TO HAR MEGGIDO (16:13-14) TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD AND HIS FORCES. JOHN TELLS US EMPHATICALLY HOW THINGS TURN OUT: THE LAMB WINS.

REVELATION 17:15-18 - THE ALLIANCE BREAKS

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE?

WHEN THINGS DON'T WORK OUT AND THEIR POWER IS NO MATCH FOR THE LAMB, THEY TURN ON THEMSELVES AND THE WOMAN IS DESTROYED. THERE ARE OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSIONS TO THE WAY SHE IS DESTROYED, ONE BEING THE WAY THE EVIL QUEEN JEZEBEL DIED (2 KINGS 9:30-37).

BABYLON-BEAST BREAKDOWN:

THE WOMAN:

- 1 - A WOMAN SITTING ON A "SCARLET BEAST", FULL OF BLASPHEMOUS NAMES
- 2 - THE WOMAN IS WEARING PURPLE AND SCARLET. SHE'S WEARING GOLD, PRECIOUS STONES AND PEARLS.
- 3 - SHE'S HOLDING A GOLD CUP FULL OF "ABOMINATIONS AND UNCLEAN THINGS"
- 4 - ON HER FOREHEAD IS WRITTEN A MYSTERIOUS NAME: "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"
- 5 - SHE'S DRUNK ON THE "BLOOD OF THE SAINTS"
- 6 - SHE IS ALSO REFERRED TO AS SITTING ON "MANY WATERS" (17:1) WHICH WE LEARN IS A SYMBOL FOR "PEOPLES, MULTITUDES AND NATIONS AND TONGUES" (17:15) WHICH SHE IS RULING OVER/INFLUENCING.
- 7 - THE WOMAN IS IDENTIFIED AS "THE GREAT CITY WHICH REIGNS OVER THE KINGS OF THE EARTH" (17:18). IN JOHN'S DAY, THIS WOULD LIKELY MEAN ROME WHICH WAS HIS GENERATION'S VERSION OF THE BABYLON SYSTEM OF HUMANS TRYING TO RULE WITHOUT GOD.

THE BEAST THE WOMAN IS RIDING:

- 1 - THE SCARLET BEAST THE WOMAN IS RIDING HAS SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS
- 2 - THE HEADS REPRESENT SEVEN MOUNTAINS RULED BY SEVEN KINGS
- 3 - THE TEN HORNS REPRESENT 10 KINGS WHO ARE NOT YET KINGS BUT WILL RECEIVE AUTHORITY FROM THE BEAST FOR A SHORT TIME.
- 4 - BOTH THE HEADS AND HORNS REPRESENT KINGS/RULERS WHO WILL BE WORKING FOR THE BEAST - EITHER IN THE PAST ALREADY, OR THE FUTURE. THEY WILL BE USING THEIR AUTHORITY TO ACCOMPLISH THE BEAST'S DESIRES - SPECIFICALLY TO WAGE WAR AGAINST THE LAMB.

THE TEXT TELLS US THAT THE HARLOT/BEAST ALLIANCE WILL BE DEFEATED BY THE LAMB:

REVELATION 17:14 - "THESE WILL WAGE WAR AGAINST THE LAMB, AND THE LAMB WILL OVERCOME THEM, BECAUSE HE IS LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS, AND THOSE WHO ARE WITH HIM ARE THE CALLED AND CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL."

LIKELY, AS A RESULT OF THIS DEFEAT, THE ALLIANCE BREAKS APART AND THE THE BEAST KINGS (HEADS AND HORNS) WILL "HATE THE HARLOT AND MAKE HER DESOLATE AND NAKED...AND WILL EAT HER FLESH AND BURN HER WITH FIRE (17:16)." THIS WILL ULTIMATELY BE GOD'S DOING (17:17).

AS WE SAID AT THE START, THERE'S A LOT TO SORT OUT IN REVELATION 17. SO, BEFORE WE ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS THAT THE BEAST "WAS" AND "IS NOT" AND WHAT TO MAKE OF THE "EIGHTH KING WHO IS ONE OF THE SEVEN" (17:11), LET'S PAUSE AND REFLECT ON WHAT WE HAVE JUST READ AND WHAT ARE SOME INITIAL TAKEAWAYS.

1 - THE REIGN OF THE WOMAN IS NOT FOREVER.

THIS IS A SCARY SECTION. WE HAVE THE CURTAIN PULLED BACK WHICH IS COVERING THE TRUE INFLUENCER OF THE NATIONS. IT'S A HARLOT RIDING A FEROCIOUS BEAST! BABYLON LIVES! THE NATIONS ARE SEDUCED AND DRUNK BY HER WAYS. BUT, THOUGH THE REIGN OF "BABYLON" HAS BEEN PERVASIVE AND LONG, IT WILL END AT LAST. THE LAMB DEFEATS HER "BECAUSE HE IS THE LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS." (17:14).

THE FALL OF THE BABYLON/BEAST SYSTEM IS SURE BECAUSE GOD HAS SAID IT WILL BE SO. HE WILL EVEN USE THE EVIL FIGURES AGAINST THEMSELVES TO BRING ABOUT HIS WILL AND MAKE WAY FOR HIS ETERNAL REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS UPON THE EARTH. THIS IS A GOOD WORD TO HOLD ON TO AS EVIL RISES. WE'VE REACHED A CLIMAX POINT OF EVIL'S POWER IN REVELATION AND EVEN THOUGH THE DEVIL GROWLS AND HOWLS BEFORE HE IS DESTROYED - WE ARE TOLD THE TRUTH OF HIS DEMISE THROUGHOUT THESE PAGES.

2 - THE WORLD'S/DEVIL'S WAY IS A COUNTERFEIT.

THINK HOW MANY TIMES IN THIS CHAPTER WE READ THINGS THAT ARE RELATED TO TRUE THINGS OF GOD AND HIS KINGDOM. DO YOU SEE THE FALSE EQUIVALENCY SHE IS ATTEMPTING?

THE WOMAN APPEARS TO BE AN INFLUENTIAL AUTHORITY OVER ALL THE NATIONS. SHE HAS A NAME WRITTEN ON HER FOREHEAD. SHE'S WEARING PURPLE, A COLOR TYPICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ROYALTY. SHE SITS OVER PEOPLE AND MULTITUDES AND NATIONS AND TONGUES.

IN REALITY, THIS IS A COUNTERFEIT. WE SEE SYMBOLS OF WEALTH, PLEASURE, LUST, VIOLENCE, POWER AND SENSUALITY. THESE ARE QUALITIES WHICH THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD HAVE PRIORITIZED OVER THE VIRTUES AND QUALITIES OF GOD - HUMILITY, HOLINESS, CONTENTMENT AND THANKSGIVING, SERVICE AND LOVE. THE ENTIRE DESCRIPTION OF "BABYLON" IS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE IMAGERY OF THE CHURCH IN REVELATION AS THE "BRIDE".

BE CAREFUL. THE DEVIL WANTS TO PARADE HIMSELF AS A VIABLE OPTION BUT HE'S A FRAUD. COUNTERFEITS WORK BEST WHEN THEY APPEAR TO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THE GENUINE. BUT THE WAY COUNTERFEITS ARE FOUND OUT IS TO HAVE AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL THING.

JAMES 1:16-17 (NLT) - SO DON'T BE DECEIVED, MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. 17 WHATEVER IS GOOD AND PERFECT COMES DOWN TO US FROM GOD OUR FATHER, WHO CREATED ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE HEAVENS. HE NEVER CHANGES OR CASTS A SHIFTING SHADOW.

3 - EVIL IS SCARY. SIN IS UGLY.

THIS IS PERHAPS ONE OF SCRIPTURE'S MOST DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSONIFICATIONS OF THE TRUE REALITY OF EVIL. WE JUST FINISHED STUDYING THE WRATH OF GOD WHICH IS JUSTLY COMING UPON EVIL. WE SPOKE ABOUT HOW GOD HAD BEEN CLEAR TO HIS CREATION ON WHAT IS RIGHT/WRONG AND HUMANS REJECTED HIS WAY IN FAVOR OF THEIR OWN WAY - AND THE RESULTING CONSEQUENCES OF HUMANITY'S CHOICES. AND THE VERY NEXT CHAPTER DESCRIBES WHAT EVIL REALLY LOOKS LIKE.

IT IS A DRUNK HARLOT RIDING A MULTI-HEADED AND MULTI-HORNED DISGUSTING BLOOD COLORED BEAST. SHE'S HOLDING A GOLDEN CUP AND SHE IS SIPPING ON BLOOD, LETTING IT ROLL AROUND IN HER MOUTH LIKE WINE TO TASTE EVERY NOTE AND FLAVOR. SHE IS DISGUSTING. THINK ABOUT

WHAT BEING IN THIS VISION MUST HAVE LOOKED LIKE. THINK ABOUT THE NOISES AND SOUNDS COMING FROM A HARLOT'S THRONE AND A WILD BEAST. THINK ABOUT WHAT IT SMELLS LIKE.

THIS IS EVIL. THIS IS SIN. THIS IS WICKEDNESS. THIS IS UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. THIS IS REBELLION. THIS IS GODLESSNESS. THIS IS SELFISHNESS. THIS IS PRIDE AND ARROGANCE. THIS IS VIOLENCE AND HATRED. THIS IS IMMORALITY AND PERVERSION. THIS IS WHAT EVIL REALLY LOOKS LIKE, THIS IS WHAT SIN REALLY IS.

WE CANNOT BE DECEIVED OR BLIND TO EVIL BEING CUTE AND CUDDLY OR TAME OR NEUTRAL OR ENJOYABLE. THAT IS WHAT THE DEVIL WANTS US TO BELIEVE! AS IF IT NOT REALLY THAT BAD AND AS A RESULT THAT WE CAN DABBLE IN EVIL THINGS FROM TIME TO TIME. HE IS LYING WHEN HE GETS PEOPLE TO THINK THAT THE EVIL INFLUENCES IN THE WORLD ARE SIMPLY HARMLESS ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ON LIFE.

THIS IS WHAT SIN AND EVIL REALLY LOOK LIKE. IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT TO MESS AROUND WITH? IS THIS WOMAN WHO YOU WANT TO SPEND TIME WITH? IS THIS BEAST THE ANIMAL YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH? HEAR PAUL'S EXHORTATION:

EPHESIANS 5:6-20 (NLT) - DON'T BE FOOLED BY THOSE WHO TRY TO EXCUSE THESE SINS, FOR THE ANGER OF GOD WILL FALL ON ALL WHO DISOBEY HIM. 7 DON'T PARTICIPATE IN THE THINGS THESE PEOPLE DO.

8 FOR ONCE YOU WERE FULL OF DARKNESS, BUT NOW YOU HAVE LIGHT FROM THE LORD. SO LIVE AS PEOPLE OF LIGHT! 9 FOR THIS LIGHT WITHIN YOU PRODUCES ONLY WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT AND TRUE. 10 CAREFULLY DETERMINE WHAT PLEASES THE LORD.

11 TAKE NO PART IN THE WORTHLESS DEEDS OF EVIL AND DARKNESS; INSTEAD, EXPOSE THEM. 12 IT IS SHAMEFUL EVEN TO TALK ABOUT THE THINGS THAT UNGODLY PEOPLE DO IN SECRET.

13 BUT THEIR EVIL INTENTIONS WILL BE EXPOSED WHEN THE LIGHT SHINES ON THEM, 14 FOR THE LIGHT MAKES EVERYTHING VISIBLE. THIS IS WHY IT IS SAID, "AWAKE, O SLEEPER, RISE UP FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT."

15 SO BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE. DON'T LIVE LIKE FOOLS, BUT LIKE THOSE WHO ARE WISE. 16 MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY IN THESE EVIL DAYS. 17 DON'T ACT THOUGHTLESSLY, BUT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LORD WANTS YOU TO DO. 18 DON'T BE DRUNK WITH WINE, BECAUSE THAT WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE. INSTEAD, BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, 19 SINGING PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS AMONG YOURSELVES, AND MAKING MUSIC TO THE LORD IN YOUR HEARTS. 20 AND GIVE THANKS FOR EVERYTHING TO GOD THE FATHER IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

RUN AWAY FROM SIN NO MATTER HOW GOOD THE OFFER SOUNDS. HATE THAT WHICH IS EVIL, NO MATTER HOW PRETTY IT'S DRESSED UP.