

The Great Prostitute and the Beast

Revelation 17-18

MPS God calls people to believe in Jesus and walk by faith in His righteousness; because He will judge all wickedness to eternal damnation, but the righteous will live forever with Him.

OBJ Every person should trust in Jesus and faithfully follow Him because of Five Lessons of Babylon's demise.

INTRO [Learning a lesson from someone else's mistake / failure.]

- Fall / emotional collapse / moral failure of other pastors.

God calls people to believe in Jesus and walk by faith in His righteousness; He will judge all wickedness to eternal damnation, but the righteous will live forever with Him.

OBJ Five Lessons of Babylon's demise to heed for our faithfulness of following Jesus.

Revelation 17:1-6a

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, ²with 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." ³And 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. ⁴The 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. ⁵And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." ⁶And 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.

[.1-6] One of the angels with a bowl invited John to see the judgment of the great prostitute who was seated on many waters. She is the one with whom the kinds of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with her wine earth-dwellers have become drunk. Wealth and prosperity was her seduction of kings, but it only comes with her vices and idolatries. And what the kings promoted the people fully embraced, so they all shared in their participation of worship of the beast. Sexual immorality here is not literally "sexual" necessarily, but notes the deep intimacy with which they identified themselves with the practices and patterns, as well as vices and idolatries.¹

The angel carried John away into the wilderness in the Spirit. John was supernaturally empowered by God to see what he otherwise could not have seen. He saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns. This beast is Satan as we met in 12:3. Initially the woman was seated on many waters and here she is seated on the dragon. This shows how intimately she is tied both to the nations of the earth and to the Antichrist. Her appearance is captivating and mesmerizing, by which she lures men to drink of her abominations and immoralities with her. The name on her forehead, "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.", identifies her as the capital city of the beast from which her influence will seek to spread to every other city, to be drunk with both "the blood of the saints" and of "martyrs of Jesus." In John's mind it is clear that Babylon refers to first-century Rome.² But as we will see, her influence extends far beyond Rome and the first-century. **Babylon is consumed with every imaginable abomination and immorality and filled with the blood of God's people.**

¹ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 222. Ladd states, they have entered into intimate commerce with her to share her wealth and prosperity. In so doing they have also shared her vices and idolatries."

² J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 220–221. Duvall clarifies, ""The great prostitute (a.k.a. Babylon) symbolizes a great center of pagan power and undoubtedly refers to Rome in the first century."



Lesson 1: Babylon deceives people to destruction by worshiping the Antichrist. Jesus honors with eternal life those who faithfully serve Him, even unto death.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. Mark 8:35
Adorned with all the allure of indulgence in worldly beauty, riches, pleasure, and indulgence, Babylon is a deceptive prostitute of the Antichrist drunk on the blood of God's people who only leads to eternal damnation. (17:1-6) We are now clear on who she is and what she does; Babylon lures people away from Jesus to worship the beast by indulgence in every form of immorality and idolatry imaginable, and relentlessly persecutes all who do not participate with her. **Jesus promises to give life to those who give up their life in following Him.**

APPL Who are you loving with your life, the world and all its allure and indulgence, or Jesus and His promise of abundant and eternal life?

TRANS One could easily think she would be deplorable and reprehensible, but John's reaction is quite different. John's response to the woman was that he was greatly amazed. While we may be a bit shocked by this at first, his response is very understandable, no different than any one of us think of such splendor and success. But her reality was quite different than her appearance. What we read in chapter 17 becomes very familiar as it parallels what was studied in chapter 13.

Revelation 17:7-18

⁷But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸The 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. ⁹This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰they 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. ¹¹As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. ¹²And 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. ¹³These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴They 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."

¹⁵And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. ¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, ¹⁷for 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. ¹⁸And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth."

[.7-18] The angel responds to inquire as to why John marveled as he did. The angel interprets for John what he has seen. His explanation includes not only the woman but also the beast, which reveals an "inseparable relationship between the woman and the beast."³ The beast was slain but will have a "satanic embodiment that will exceed anything that has yet occurred", but this will be very short as it will go immediately to its final, eternal doom.⁴ And just as John marveled, so earth-dwellers will marvel to be deceived by it. John's description requires a "mind with wisdom", meaning it must be spiritually discerned to be understood, but one should be careful how they interpret.⁵ The seven heads of the beast are recognized by

³ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 226.

⁴ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 226.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 315. Mounce explains, "The rather cryptic statement with which this section begins ("This calls for a mind with wisdom") may be a warning to interpret with care, or an aside to the effect that what follows "is the clue for those who can interpret it" (NEB). The number of the beast in 13:18 was introduced with a similar statement, but in neither case has the meaning been clear. What is being said is that although the interpretation of the seven heads is not obvious, it may be understood by those who ponder the riddle with care and wisdom."



most, even by those who interpret symbolically, as Rome.⁶ The “seven kings” gets more complicated. Some think this represents Roman emperors and others a succession of secular empires, but many agree that the number seven should be understood as symbolic for the power of the Roman empire.⁷ Ultimately, a simple answer cannot suffice because “The woman has formed an adulterous connection in every epoch of her history with the then existing world power.”⁸ What John saw describes worldly power in general more than only one specific historic era. Through the ages many have tried to assign meaning to the heads and horns of the beast, but these are guesses at best and not explicit to the Scripture. Scholar Robert Mounce provides the best way to understand when he states, “The single purpose...in all such number schemes is to declare the imminent end of the age. The important point is that the end is drawing near.”⁹ An eighth emerges (.11) who is like but distinct from the first seven. He is not a human ruler but the Antichrist, the evil power itself who will emerge in history as a man and rule during the great tribulation. But as we have seen, his reign will be truncated as he will be doomed to destruction. [Urgency and priority means we understand and recognize Satan’s work aligns with worldly powers and live ready to bear a faithful witness to the Lord Jesus.](#)

John explains the ten horns as ten kings who will receive authority “*for one hour, together with the beast*”, so their rule will only be for a short period. This number is symbolic of completeness of worldly powers that will hand over their power to the Antichrist. They will share the same hostility to Christ and His followers to make war on them. But they too will be conquered by the Lamb and those who are with Him. [Those who are “called and chosen and faithful” will overcome because they are with the Lamb who has conquered.](#)

The angel turns John’s attention back to the prostitute, whose judgment John was originally invited to see before the focus on the Antichrist. He learns that the waters upon which the woman sat represented the people of the world who supported her. There is a universality represented here with the woman as the capital city representing all these powers. But a civil war breaks out through all the powers of the beast and ruthlessly destroys the woman. Everything that caused John to marvel when he saw her is undone in her destruction; she is stripped bare and devoured as by wild beasts. Then John tells us who caused all this to happen. God is the one who put it into the heart of the beasts to carry out His purpose. He made them of one mind to hand over their royal power until His purpose was fulfilled. Then in judgment of the woman, that great city that held dominion over all the kings of the earth was devoured by its own allies because God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, is sovereign over all. The One who is righteous rules sovereignly over the wicked.

Lesson 2: Righteous living provides its own reward with life while wicked living destroys the one who indulges it.

for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1:6

When you run with losers (the wicked), you become a loser (wicked). The wicked never last because they devour their own by the very blood-thirst that consumes them. The Righteous cannot lose, because all their enemies are but instruments in the hand of our sovereign God to fulfill His Word. [When you walk with God your every enemy is conquered because Jesus Christ has overcome. When you walk with the wicked you will be devoured by those with whom you are most closely aligned because everyone wants to be God.](#)

APPL [Have you placed your faith in Jesus to be counted among the righteous, those who are “called and chosen and faithful”?](#)

TRANS When we come to chapter 18 we are given details of the final destruction of Babylon in poetic form.
Revelation 18:1-8

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ²And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 315. Mounce states, “There is little doubt that a first-century reader would understand this reference in any way other than as a reference to Rome, the city built upon seven hills.”

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 317. Mounce states, “The most satisfactory explanation of the seven kings is that the number seven is symbolic and stands for the power of the Roman Empire as a historic whole.”

⁸ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 228.

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 317.



place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. ³For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.” ⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. ⁷As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’ ⁸For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

[18:1-8] John sees another angel come down from heaven with great authority. He calls out that Babylon has fallen. The description is haunting, of a place where detestable spirits and creatures call home. The influence of Babylon has been vast, reaching to every nation and means of commerce, drawing them all in to participate in her immorality and even having grown rich from her luxurious indulgence. “Babylon has seduced the nations into thinking that they can dispense with God, that safety and security and prosperity will surely follow in the train of her luxury, self-indulgence, and wealth. However, this is self-deception. The final answer will be the decree of God.”¹⁰ All who indulged with her stand guilty by their participation.

Another voice from heaven cries out. This one calls to God’s people to come out from Babylon so that they do not participate with her nor suffer her demise. God has remembered her iniquities. Her pay back will be doubled from the portions she mixed for others by her influence. The voice declares that her judgment will match in righteousness what she indulged by wickedness, and though she glorified herself she will only know torment and suffering. Though she calls herself a “queen” and claims inviolability, she will be stricken and destroyed by God’s mighty hand of justice. Her destruction will be swift, and she will be consumed to show the Lord’s mighty power.

Lesson 3: God calls His people to live set apart from so that we do not suffer the judgment that is coming upon the world.

“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” Hebrews 8:12

God calls His people to come out from among the world and to set our lives apart unto Him because we are His temple.^{2Corinthians6:16-18} Of greatest note here is why God calls His people out; He remembers the iniquities of Babylon. This phrase sets in stark contrast what the Bible teaches about the sins of His people versus the sins of all the peoples of the world. God remembers the iniquities of Babylon to judge them and be known no more because their sins have not been atoned. But God remembers His people to call them to come out because He remembers no more the sins of those who have been washed and separated from their sin by the blood of Jesus. **When you reject Jesus, God remembers your sin in judgment. When you believe to receive Jesus, God remembers your name to call you out because He no more remembers your sin.**

APPL Have you responded to the Lord’s call to come out from worldliness and your sin, to be atoned and washed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and set apart unto Him?

Revelation 18:9-20

⁹And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, “Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come.”

¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. ¹⁴“The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found

¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 238.



again!" ¹⁵The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud. ¹⁶"Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! ¹⁷For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" ¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

[9-20] Babylon was so great no one dared think she could fall, but she fell in an instant. Those who lavished in her riches and luxuries watched her burn, but from a distance as they feared her torment they saw. In Babylon the mighty fall, and in a single hour her judgment comes. All the glory and riches of this world, the pleasures and delicacies, the conveniences and indulgences, and the great extent of them, are suddenly brought to nothing. Those who watched her torment now weep and mourn because the one who was clothed and adorned in every way is now laid waste, and in only a single hour. And the angel declares(.20), "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" Unimaginable riches and wealth, and indulgence and pleasure for every desire is gone. But Heaven and all God's saints rejoice because He has vindicated His holy Name and saved from destruction those he redeemed.

Four specific items are of note here. First, the extent of Babylon's riches and wealth, and every luxury imaginable in life. The way John lists them emphasizes the extent of their abundance and significance of their influence on the people. All that was available, and the amount of them, was overwhelming. These were all the things that filled their life to consume their heart. Second, note the three groups that beheld Babylon's demise(.9,11,17); kings, merchants, and shipmasters and seafaring men were all stunned by her demise. Third, each one that watched her torment did so only from a distance because of their fear, powerless to do anything about it, they wept and mourned because of what was lost. Fourth, notice how sudden and fast her destruction comes(.10,17,19); "For in a single hour she has been laid waste." It was unimaginable that life would ever be without all that was so abundant, but even more inconceivable was how it ended so quickly. Proverbs 18:11 states, "A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination." The allure of worldly affluence deceives one to think that by it there is stability and security. But the sound of God's justice silences wickedness and vindicates the righteousness of His Name.

Lesson 4: The security of worldly riches is futile and meaningless, deceptive on earth unless invested for eternity.

"Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." Proverbs 11:4

Worldly riches indulge the pleasures of life to deceive one to believe they are safe and secure, that nothing could overcome. But indulgence is the strategy of their deception. Like drunkenness, they strip one of every faculty to respond, blur reality so one cannot see clearly, slow the mind to ignore truth, disregard wisdom, and continue on; and so lead one to death by indulgence. Psalm 49(.7a) makes clear that worldly riches can rescue a life and warns of the deception of riches when it states, "Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life". There is no worldly resource that can purchase security from God; only to submit all of one's life to Him.

"those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? ⁷Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, ⁸for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, ⁹that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

¹⁶Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. ¹⁷For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him. ¹⁸For though, while he lives, he counts himself blessed—and though you get praise when you do well for yourself—¹⁹his soul will go to the generation of his fathers, who will never again see light. Psalm 49:6-9,15-19

APPL Are you trusting in worldly resource as your security of life, or are you trusting in God, even with your life resource?



Revelation 18:21-24

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; 22 and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, 23 and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."

[21-24] A mighty angel throws a millstone into the sea and declares the end of Babylon.¹¹ The sounds of Babylon will be no more; no more music and celebration, no more craftsmanship and production; her light will shine no more, as every celebration of life ceases. Babylon will be no more; she is silent, dark, and empty, dead in every realm of the city. But note one last quality and one final guilt of Babylon that is most important. The angel declares *"for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery."* George Ladd explains, "The language used implies an attitude of arrogance on the part of Babylon's merchants. Her sin did not consist always in the fact of her wealth, but in the overweening pride and self-exaltation induced by her wealth."¹² [Babylon's quality that produced her every imaginable immorality and deceived the nations to lead to her downfall was her arrogance and pride.](#) And this one quality is coupled with her one final guilt; *"And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."* Babylon's spirit of pride and arrogance fueled her hate for God in alliance with the beast to produce her guilt over who she persecuted, God's people. John speaks of an influence far beyond only his time but of an "eschatological Babylon" in which the wicked influence of Satan and human pride allied become a catalyst for far greater immorality and persecution than only what He knew in First Century Rome.¹³ [Satan aligns with the powers of this world to persecute and destroy God's people, but his every effort is frustrated and ultimately stopped by God's sovereign rule.](#)

Lesson 5: [The spirit of Babylon remains alive and strong today, to ally with Satan and destroy God's people, but will only deceive and lead to eternal damnation.](#)

["Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12](#)

The lure of the spirit of Babylon is as deceptive today as it has always been, and it remains very strong. It is an alliance with Satan that consumes all one's hope and promise in this world but only deceives to lead to eternal damnation in the end. Every time one gives in to sin's temptation another allegiance with Satan is struck; another worldly resource treasured above the glory of Christ, another immorality indulged against the command of Christ, another adultery committed against the promise of our salvation in Christ. You will not walk with the wicked in this world and rejoice with the saints in eternity. [The only way to gain in this world, whether by worldly riches and wealth, or in pleasures, is to honor the Lord through them that He might fill your heart with His righteousness.](#)

APPL [The life one lives today, and the choices made require each one to ask, "where will I be found on the day of God's judgment, destroyed with Babylon or rejoicing with God's people?"](#)

¹¹ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 242. Ladd states, "The casting of a great stone into the sea is a symbolic act representing Babylon's overthrow."

¹² George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 243.

¹³ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 243. Ladd states, "The influence of Babylon had extended throughout the world and inspired other cities to follow her example of persecuting the saints. No historical equivalent to this is known in the first century; John is thinking of eschatological Babylon."

