



Week Ten – Revelation 17-18
Community Group Study Guide for the week of May 9, 2021

Suggested Reading: Revelation 17-18 prior to meeting

Study Revelation 17, “The Woman on the Beast.” Choose some or all of these questions to answer and discuss:

1. What are some examples of champions or winners?
2. Why will people all over the world be astonished at the beast? ([17:8](#))
3. How did the angel explain the seven heads of the beast? ([17:9-11](#))
4. What action will the ten kings take and what will be the result? ([17:13-14](#))
5. What systems ("babylons") in the world today are hostile to God?
6. What difference does it make that Jesus is the Lord of lords and King of kings?
7. What can you use to remind yourself each day this week of God's rule and superiority over all evil in the world?

Life Application Bible Notes - Chapter 17

[17:1ff](#) The destruction of Babylon mentioned in [16:17-21](#) is now described in greater detail. The "great prostitute," called Babylon, represents the early Roman Empire with its many gods and the blood of Christian martyrs on its hands. The water stands for either sea commerce or a well-watered (well-provisioned) city. The great prostitute represents the seductiveness of the governmental system that uses immoral means to gain its own pleasure, prosperity, and advantage. In contrast to the prostitute, Christ's bride, the church, is pure and obedient ([19:6-9](#)). The wicked city of Babylon contrasts with the heavenly city of Jerusalem ([21:10-22:5](#)). The original readers probably rather quickly identified Babylon with Rome, but Babylon also symbolizes any system that is hostile to God (see [17:5](#)).

[17:3](#) The angel took John into the wilderness to see the prostitute in her reality. (The scarlet beast is either the dragon of [12:3](#) or the beast out of the sea described in [13:1](#).) Sometimes we can only get a clear view of reality when we step back from our daily lives and see the patterns of evil and sin around us. Retreats, conferences, and days of prayer and fasting can help us extricate ourselves from jobs, newspapers, and television and bring us to new spiritual heights. Take time to view the reality of your life and evaluate its direction and activities. Do these glorify God and renew you to serve others?

17:6 Throughout history, people have been killed for their faith. Over the last century, millions have been killed by oppressive governments, and many of those victims were believers. The woman's drunkenness shows her pleasure in her evil accomplishments and her false feeling of triumph over the church. But every martyr who has fallen before her sword has only served to strengthen the faith of the church. Persecution is by no means a thing of the past. Christians in many parts of the world know that faith in Christ amounts to a death sentence. Believers who live in places free of such persecution must not forget to pray for their brothers and sisters in Christ in those difficult parts of the world.

17:8 In [chapter 12](#) we met the dragon (Satan). In [chapter 13](#) we saw the beast from the sea and the power he received from Satan. In [chapters 14-16](#) we see God's great judgments. In this chapter, a scarlet beast similar to the beast and the dragon appears as an ally of the great prostitute. The beast was alive, died, and then came back to life. The beast's resurrection symbolizes the persistence of evil. This resurgence of evil power will convince many to join forces with the beast, but those who choose the side of evil condemn themselves to the devil's fate—eternal torment.

17:8 For more information on the Book of Life, see the note on [3:5](#).

17:9-11 Here John is referring to Rome, the city famous for its seven hills. Many say that this city also symbolized all evil in the world—any person, religion, group, government, or structure that opposed Christ. Whatever view is taken of the seven hills and seven kings, this section indicates the climax of Satan's struggle against God. Evil's power is limited, and its destruction is on the horizon.

17:12 As we ponder the identity of the seven kings and the emergence of the ten kings, we must see John's theme of worldly power and its ultimate ineffectiveness against God and his people. Their authority only lasts "for one brief moment," symbolizing its brevity and ultimate destruction. As Christians, have we become infatuated with the worldly power of movie stars, sports celebrities, political coalitions, and world economic forces? Are you craving the power and prestige that position, wealth, and connections offer? If so, you are an easy target for Satan's great deception. Worldly power is Satan's trap; the desire for it can turn us away from God. Worship only God and make it your strongest desire to serve him.

17:16 In a dramatic turn of events, the prostitute's allies turn on her and destroy her. This is how evil operates. Destructive by its very nature, it discards its own adherents when they cease to serve its purposes. An unholy alliance is an uneasy alliance because each partner puts its own interests first.

17:17 No matter what happens, we must trust that God is still in charge, that God overrules all the plans and intrigues of the evil one, and that God's plans will happen just as he says. God even uses people opposed to him as tools to execute his will. Although he allows evil to permeate this present world, the new earth will never know sin.

Study Revelation 18, “The Fall of Babylon.” Choose some or all of these questions to answer and discuss:

1. Why do you think many people enjoy seeing the rich, the great, and the famous toppled from their lofty pedestals?
2. How will the fall of Babylon affect rulers and merchants all over the earth? ([18:9](#), [11](#), [15](#))
3. What will happen to Babylon’s wealth? ([18:10-19](#))
4. Why will the sea captains and sailors be upset over the destruction of Babylon? ([18:17-19](#))
5. In what ways can we become ensnared by wealth?
6. What can we do to avoid being slaves to money?
7. What is one step you can take today to put things and money in proper perspective?

Life Application Bible Notes - Chapter 18

[18:1ff](#) This chapter shows the complete destruction of Babylon, John's metaphorical name for the evil world power and all it represents. Everything that tries to block God's purposes will come to a violent end. For more information on how the book of Revelation uses the name *Babylon*, see the note on [14:8](#).

[18:2, 3](#) Merchants in the Roman Empire grew rich by exploiting the sinful pleasures of their society. Many businesspeople today do the same thing. Businesses and governments are often based on greed, money, and power. Many bright individuals are tempted to take advantage of an evil system to enrich themselves. Christians are warned to stay free from the lure of money, status, and the good life. We are to live according to the values Christ exemplified: service, giving, self-sacrifice, obedience, and truth.

[18:4-8](#) The people of Babylon had lived in luxury and pleasure. The city boasted, "I am queen on my throne.... I have no reason to mourn." The powerful, wealthy people of this world are susceptible to this same attitude. A person who is financially comfortable often feels invulnerable, secure, and in control, feeling no need for God or anyone else. This kind of attitude defies God, and his judgment against it is harsh. We are told to avoid Babylon's sins. If you are financially secure, don't become complacent and deluded by the myth of self-sufficiency. Use your resources to help others and advance God's Kingdom.

[18:9, 10](#) Those who are tied to the world's system will lose everything when it collapses. What they have worked for a lifetime to build up will be destroyed in one hour. Those who work only for material rewards will have nothing when they die or when their possessions are destroyed. What can we take with us to the new earth? Our faith, our Christian character, and our relationships with other believers. These are more important than any amount of money, power, or pleasure.

[18:9-19](#) Those who are in control of various parts of the economic system will mourn at Babylon's fall. The political leaders will mourn because they were the overseers of Babylon's wealth and were in a position to enrich themselves greatly. The merchants will mourn because Babylon, the greatest customer for their goods, will be gone. The sea captains will no longer have anywhere to bring their goods because the merchants will have nowhere to sell them. The fall of the evil world system affects all who enjoyed and depended on it. No one will remain unaffected by Babylon's fall.

[18:11-14](#) The voice from heaven ([18:4](#)) continued to prophesy against the greedy merchants. "The fancy things you loved" and the "luxuries and splendor" were gone. This list of merchandise illustrates the extreme materialism of this society. Few of these goods were necessities—most are luxuries. Even people had become commodities—sold as slaves to Babylon. The desire for nonessential luxuries had driven these merchants. Yet, how many of these luxuries listed are in *your* home? Most people will find that they own almost everything on this list. We are people who truly live in great luxury. We, too, are in danger of being absorbed in possessions and pleasure. Make sure that your desires lead you in the right direction. Put boundaries on them. Don't go after everything you see. Keep your desires on serving God and building his Kingdom by helping others.

How Can a Person Keep Away From the Evil System? Here are some suggestions:

People must always be more important than products. Keep away from pride in your own programs, plans, and successes. Remember that God's will and Word must never be compromised. People must always be considered above the making of money. Do what is right, no matter what the cost. Be involved in businesses that provide worthwhile products or services—not just things that feed the world's desires.

[18:11-19](#) God's people should not live for money, because money will be worthless in eternity. And they should keep on guard constantly against greed, a sin that is always ready to take over their lives. God wants us to work and to provide for our families, and he commands the proper use of money. But when the desire for money fills our lives, it becomes a false god. Don't be enslaved by the desire for wealth.