

LESSON 6

THE DOOM OF BABYLON

THE GREAT HARLOT (17:1–7)

Finally, chapters 17 through 19 reveal “the full story” of Babylon’s destruction: In chapter 17, there appears an explanation regarding the identity of Babylon. In chapter 18, her fall is graphically portrayed. In chapter 19, there will be rejoicing among the faithful over her fall. The amount of space devoted to the fall of Babylon indicates the significance of this event.

John’s intention for his readers was that they might understand Rome was heading for destruction, and the message for readers today is that *all* opposition to the Lord will ultimately be put down.

1. How do the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon represent the three approaches the devil uses against people?
2. What are the “many waters” in 17:1?
3. Why might John have been carried to the wilderness in 17:3?
4. What does the phrase “sitting on” in verse 4 signify?
5. What city would have come to the minds of John’s readers when he used the imagery of Babylon?
6. What was the full nature of Babylon’s “prostitution”?
7. What does the phrase translated “wondered greatly” in verse 6 mean?

THE BEAST WITH SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS (17:8–14)

John’s amazement had been directed at the woman, but the angel proposed to explain both the harlot *and* the beast. The woman could not be understood apart from her steed—even as the four horsemen could not be understood apart from their horses.

8. Why is the interpretation that “is not” in verse 8 means the beast did not exist at the time of John’s writing unlikely?
9. What does the phrase “was and is not and will come” (17:8) mean about the beast?
10. What did the angel mean when he said, “Here is the mind which has wisdom” (17:9)?
11. How might we explain the enigmatic phrase “is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven” (17:11)?
12. What would be a typical listing created by those who believe the seven kings are worldwide empires, and what are the weaknesses to this approach?
13. What Roman emperors would some people suggest to solve the puzzle of the seven kings, and what are the strengths and weaknesses to this approach?
14. What other suggestions have been offered for identifying the seven kings?
15. What indications are there that we do not need to assign names to the seven kings?
16. What war is referred to in verse 14?
17. In what ways do Christians fulfill the characteristics listed of them in Revelation 17:14?

GOD’S PURPOSE (17:15–18)

As already noted, the influence of Babylon was far-reaching. Nevertheless, Babylon would fall.

18. What were the ten horns in verse 16?
19. Who, according to those who take verse 16 literally, might fulfill this verse?
20. What is so striking and encouraging about verse 17?