

“That Beastly Woman” * Revelation 17 & 18
August 20, 2006

I. The 3 Sets of Judgments in Revelation

- A. The **Seal** Judgments.
- B. The **Trumpet** Judgments
- C. The **Bowl** Judgments

And what is the purpose of God’s wrath? *Matthew 13:40*

To eradicate and evict evil from the evil. To weed it out.

II. Characteristics of the Great Prostitute whom God will sweep away

- A. She is **popular** (verse 2)
- B. She is very **powerful** (verse 3)
- C. She is very **beautiful** (verse 4)
- D. She is very **evil** (verse 4)
- E. She is full of **idolatry** and hostile to God’s **people**.
(verse 5)

What do we know about Babylon?

The Tower of Babel was erected there in defiance to God.

God judged rebellious Judah by turning her over to Babylon in 586BC.

God judged Babylon later on and destroyed it, but it remained a symbol of pagan opposition to God and his people.

III. A Teaching Detour

A. What are the 3 interpretative approaches to understanding Revelation?

- 1. The **historicist** approach – it is an epistle for times of **old**.
- 2. The **futurist** approach – it is an epistle for the **endtimes**.
- 3. The **spiritual** approach – it is an epistle for **all times**.

B. The historical approach

- 1. What is its advantage?

*It allows the full-depth of **prophecy** to be appreciated.*

- 2. In what ways are some prophecies multi-dimensional?

Some prophecies are one-dimensional (one pronouncement/one fulfillment; e.g. “Peter, tonight you’ll deny me 3 times”).

Others are multi-dimensional with an initial fulfillment (a “prototype” or picture of what God is talking about) and an ultimate fulfillment. Isaiah 7:14 is an example of this. The prophecies of Daniel about the antichrist are on this order. The historicist approach allows to see the full depth of these prophecies.

3. What are its drawbacks?

It tends to confine God's words to the past, essentially putting a gag order on God, forbidding him to speak to us directly today.

C. The Futurist Approach

1. What are its advantages?

It takes Jesus at his word that he is "with us always to the end of the age". It believes in predictive prophecy – that when God said Israel would be reborn as a nation in the last days, he meant it.

2. What are its drawbacks?

Futurists often fail to see God's footprints in the past. They also are prone to making outrageous predictions of what is to come. They are often not very humble.

D. The Spiritual Approach

1. What are its advantages?

They understand the full richness of Scripture, in recognizing that God does speak to us in symbols and shadows. 666 is clearly a symbol, as is "Babylon" in Revelation, as is the "beast" which takes us back to Daniel.

2. What are its drawbacks?

The symbolic approach tends to make God more distant, more silent, and less powerful. Liberal Christians love looking at Scripture symbolically, as though they're almost embarrassed by predictive prophecy.

E. How do these differing approaches interpret the rest of Revelation 17?

1. Historicist

The "wounded head":

Some historicist interpreters of Revelation believe that this might be a reference to the revival of the Roman empire after Nero's death.

The 7 kings and the 8th to follow:

The 10 kingdoms:

2. Futurist

The "wounded head"

The antichrist will appear to be killed – perhaps by an assassin's bullet – but then come back to life, thus mimicking Christ in his resurrection.

The 7 kings and the 8th to follow:

The 10 kingdoms:

3. Spiritual

The "wounded head"

John might be referring to Jesus' death on the cross, which inflicted a mortal wound on Satan, but that Satan recovered so-to-speak and will continue to lash out at the church until Christ's return.

The 7 kings and the 8th to follow:

The 10 kingdoms:

F. And who then is the Great Prostitute according to these viewpoints? What is probably the best understanding?

III. The "World"

A. How does the "world's" values differ from God's?

B. Do all the characteristics of the Great Prostitute describe Babylon (the "world"?)

C. How should we respond to what John is telling us here? The key verse:

1. We need to have a **discerning** mind.

2. We need to have an **undivided** heart.

3. We need to have a **faithful** spirit, filled with love and trust for God.

Isaiah 25:9 "In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'"

Isaiah 26:20 – "Go my people, enter your rooms, and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by."