**The Woman and the Scarlet Beast**

**17:1** Chapter 17 amplifies the 6th and 7th bowls.

John draws on Jeremiah’s words to Babylon in his day (Jer. 51:13). Sitting signifies sovereignty.

**17:2** This probably doesn’t merely mean literal immorality. The nations and kings have sold themselves to Babylon’s corrupt economic and worldly system to gain material success and security. They have been seduced to compromise.

**17:3** Carried into the wilderness alludes to Isaiah 21:1-2.

The beast is portrayed much like the one in 13:1, so is the same. Both allude to Daniel 7:3-7; 20, 24.

The woman represents the ungodly world that uses its commercial, social, and political system to persecute Christians.

**17:4** Clothing is scarlet, associating with the blood of the saints, spilled in persecution.

**17:5** Each trade guild had a patron god that was to be worshipped in a pagan temple, usually holding a bust of the Caesar.

The name on a forehead represented their character and their relationship either to God or to Satan.

**17:5** John was astonished. Perhaps because the description is quite similar in certain ways to the description of the bride-city of Christ (21:18-21; 18:16; 19:8). The high priest was adorned with gold, purple, scarlet, linen, and precious stones (Ex. 25:7; 28:5-9, 15-20; 35:9).

The harlot described here, may allude back to Jezebel mentioned in Rev. 2:20-24. A seductress who convinced people in church to embrace worldly systems.

**17:8** The beast is described in a parody of how God is described (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5).

The language of the angel is similar to that in Daniel 7.

Unbelievers will be astonished at the seeming recovery of the beast when he appeared to be vanquished.

True believers, those whose name is written in the book of life from the foundation of time, will not be fooled.

**17:9** The seven mountains represent kingdoms. In the Old Testament, mountains symbolized human or divine kingdoms (Is. 2:2; Jer. 51:25; Ezek. 35:3; Dan. 2:35, 45; Zech. 4:7).

The number 7 represents fulness, or completeness, representing the worldly powers aligned against God’s people through the ages. The beast would then be a trans-temporal figure.

Some commentators look to the 7 hills that surrounded Rome. Rome would have been the supreme example in John’s time.

**17:10-11** Some have tried to identify the specific Roman emperor who is the sixth king. Starting from the first, Nero would have been the 6th, but John would be writing under Domitian, the 12th. The 7 kings may represent the kingdoms through the ages that have dominated the world system opposed to God. Being the 6th king would indicate much of history is now past with not much more time till the end.

**17:11** The beast as an 8th king, indicates he will be of the same kind as the others. Perhaps he will be manifested in the last days to a greater degree.

**17:12** The ten kings draw their source from Daniel 7:7-8. 20, 24. Ten probably is not literal, but symbolizes their great power. They may span the ages and represent worldly powers opposed to God.

One hour draws from Daniel 4:17. It is repeated in 18:10, 17, 19.

**17:13** The ten kings have one goal, to destroy Babylon before attacking the Lamb.

**17:15** Many waters at times in the Old Testament refers to nations (Is. 8:7; 23:10; Jer. 46:7-8; 47:2; 51:13).

**17:16-18** Babylon is the great harlot. The nations, under the direction of the beast, will turn on Babylon and destroy it in a cataclysmic civil war. The Babylonian harlot may be modeled after Jezebel. Her flesh was ultimately eaten (2 Kings 9:36).

Apostate Israel is often referred to as a harlot (2 Chron. 21:11; Ezek. 16:15, 17, 28, 35, 41; 23:1-21, 44; Is. 1:21; 57:3; Jer. 2:20; 3:1; 13:27; Hos. 2:2-5; 4:11-12, 15, 18; 5:4; 9:1; Mic. 1:7).

The Old Testament foresees the enemies of God fighting among themselves at the end of the age (Ezek. 38:21; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 14:13).

**The Fall of Babylon the Great**

**18:1** This angel might be a christophany (an appearance of Christ), for every ascription of glory to a heavenly creature in Revelation is to God (1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 19:1; 21:11, 23).

**18:2** A mighty voice symbolizes great authority.

Despite Babylon’s outward beauty and magnificence, it has become a dwelling place of demons. See Isaiah 13:20-22; 34:11.

**18:3** Idolatry is often described as sexual immorality. This alludes to God’s condemnation of Tyre, a great merchant city (Ezek. 26-28), and to Babylon (Is. 23:8). To drink, refers to committing idolatry. By embracing Babylon’s idolatrous and immoral business practices, the nations have become rich, but have sold their soul in the process.

**18:4** God warns believers to come out from the system to avoid the looming judgment (See Is. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 45). This could allude to Lot escaping from Sodom as well (Gen. 19:12-22).

**18:6** Babylon will pay double for her sins. What she did to others will be done to her.

**18:8** Just as ancient Babylon was overthrown in one day, so modern Babylon will fall suddenly as well.

**18:11** The fall of Babylon’s economic system means merchants will no longer have buyers for their products (Ezek. 27:28-32).

**18:12-13** This is a representative list of trade products. These are luxury goods that Rome consumed voraciously.

**18:16** The adornment described here is similar to what the high priest wore (Ex. 28:5-9, 15-20).

**18:21** The millstone thrown into the sea alludes to Jeremiah 51:63, Ezek. 26:12, 21.

**18:23** Sorcery, immorality, and idolatry are closely linked (Rev. 9:20-21; Gal. 5:19-21). The lure of economic success and wealth cast a spell on many merchants who sacrificed their souls to become rich.

**The Downfall of the Beasts**

**19**:1 Hallelujah is a Greek transliteration meaning “Praise the Lord!”

**19:2** This is based on Jeremiah 51:25.

Her hands allude to 2 Kings 9:7 where Jezebel was punished for her persecution of God’s people and her promotion of idolatry. Psalm 79:10 is also in the background.

**19:3** Smoke ascending alludes to Edom (Is. 34:10), indicating God’s judgment.

**19:7** God’s people, the Church, is now described as a bride, betrothed to the Lamb. The background to this may be found in Isaiah 61:10.

**19:8** The saints may also be viewed as priests, for the high priest was clothed in linen (Ex. 28; 39; Ezek. 44:17). The harlot also wears linen which may be an attempt to act as a priest as well (18:16).

**19:9** The marriage feast indicates intimate fellowship at last with the Lamb.

**19:10** John fell at the angel’s feet to worship. Perhaps John mistook the angel for Christ (1:13-16; 10:1-3). It shows how easily idolatry can occur, even by well-intentioned saints.

**19:12** The eyes of fire harkens back to Rev. 1:14. The white horse and eyes of fire indicate righteous judgment.

He wore many crowns on his head. The dragon wears 7 and the beast wears 10 (12:3; 13:1).

**19:13-14** We are told no one knows his name, but then are told his name is the Word of God. A name represents a person’s character. Only those Christ reveals himself to, can know him that way. The saints have had that revealed to them, but the unbelieving world cannot know him that way. This may allude to Isaiah 63:1-3.

A robe dipped in blood refers to his judgment of the nations (Is. 63:1-3).

**19:14** The army probably consists of the saints, though they will not do any fighting (Matt. 13:40-42; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess. 1:7; Jude 14-15).

**19:15** The sword in his mouth relates to Rev. 1:16, Is. 49:2; 11:4.

In Revelation, only saints typically wore white garments (3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-24).

In the Old Testament, the wine press of God’s wrath looked to his final judgment (Is. 63:2-6).

Once again, a further name is mentioned, King of kings and Lord of lords.

His thigh is where his sword typically would be and where he would place his hand to take an oath (Gen. 24:2, 9; 47:29).

**19:17-18** Is a parody on the wedding feast (19:9). It alludes to Ezekiel who spoke of the great battle against God and Magog (Ezek. 39:17-20).

**19:19** This verse alludes to Zechariah 14:2, 7-8.

“The” is before “war” indicating it is the climactic war to end history. It is the same as in 11:2. Psalm 2:2 gives background to this event.

**19:20** Despite all of the beast’s scheming and organizing, God captures the beasts without even mentioning a battle, so overwhelming is God’s power compared to theirs.

Thrown into the lake of fire alive indicates they do not die but suffer eternal torment.

Those fighting for the beast are destroyed by a word from God (Matt. 25:41).

If the beasts are symbolic for opponents of God through the ages, then this may be symbolic, or the beasts at the end of the age may be the most vehement and diabolical of its kind.

**The downfall of the dragon, the millennium, Final Judgment**

**20**

This is the most debated and confusing chapter in Revelation. People take several different approaches to interpreting it. The three main approaches are:

1. Premillennial

Believes that after the two beasts and their army is defeated, Satan is bound for 1,000 years. Christ comes to rule on earth during that time. After 1,000 years, Satan is released. He gathers nations in one last attempt to overthrow God. He is defeated and the final judgment takes place where he is thrown into the lake of fire.

1. Post millennial

Believe the millennium begins near the end of the Church age and that Christ’s climactic return and victory take place at its end.

1. Amillennial

Believe that the millennium is identical to the Church Age between Christ’s resurrection and his return. Some believe that the battles in Revelation 19 and 20 describe the same battle and that after it is over, the beasts and Satan are thrown into the lake of fire simultaneously and the final judgment takes place.

**20:1-3** The abyss appears to be a prison where evil spirits are held until the final judgment. Amillennialists argue that Satan was restricted in this way during the Church age and unable to fully deceive the nations to destroy the Church until the end time.

**20:2** Here four names are used for Satan: dragon, ancient serpent, devil, Satan.

**20:3** Premillennialistshold that the two beasts are in the lake of fire now, but Satan is held for 1,000 years in prison.

Some see many parallels between chapters 12 and 20 and believe they describe the same event.

1,000 years. This is the only place where the Millennium is mentioned. Some take it as symbolic or describing a long time. Others take the time literally. Because there is so much symbolism here, dragon, great chain, serpent etc. it is likely that 1,000 years is symbolic as well.

**20:4-6** Christ reigns with those who had been beheaded for their faith. They may reflect all martyrs, or perhaps all believers.

They came to life to reign with Christ in the first resurrection. This draws on Daniel 7:22. Premillennialists are uncertain if only these are resurrected at this time and the remaining believers are raised at the end of time. Or if unbelievers are not raised at this time. Coming to life may mean going to be with Christ in heaven spiritually until their bodily resurrection at the end of time. Amillennialists hold that these could represent all believers, or else martyrs who represent all believers. Of the 46 mentions of thrones in Revelation, they occur in heaven.

The saints have a dual role of kings and priests, drawing from Exodus 19:6.

**20:7-10** Premillennialists believe after 1,000 years, Satan will be released from the abyss and immediately begin deceiving the nations once more. For 1,000 years Christ will have ruled on earth, yet many will abandon him and join in the revolt. It is argued that God gives people one last chance but they prove that even after 1,000 years of Christ’s reign on earth, they would choose to follow Satan. Amillennialists view this as occurring at the same time as Revelation 19 and there being one battle of Armageddon.

Gog and Magog are drawn from Ezekiel’s description of the end of the age battle against God’s forces in Ezekiel 38-39. Some have tried to identify them with Russia and modern countries, but this is not justified.

The people gathered are like the sand of the sea.

The word “saint” is used 13 times in Revelation, always referring to Christians.

The “beloved city” may draw from Psalm 87:2-3. This has traditionally been identified as Jerusalem.

Calling fire down upon enemies looks back to Elijah 2 Kings 1:10-14.

**20:11-15**

The book of life draws on Daniel 7:10 and 12:1-2.

The sea was typically viewed as a place of evil where people are consumed to death. Now the sea must surrender its captives.

Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. This could represent them as demonic or simply that they will now be utterly destroyed.

The second death is a spiritual death suffered by unbelievers. It is not an annihilation but eternal torment.

Unbelievers are ultimately thrown into the lake of fire along with the beasts, Satan, Hades, and death.

**Questions**

1. **How does Babylon reflect modern commerce and culture?**
2. **How does seeing what is happening in heaven encourage those of us still doing battle on earth?**
3. **What strikes you about how the beasts and the dragon are finally defeated?**
4. **What strikes you about how easily deceived so many people will be by the dragon and beasts?**
5. **What pressures are brought to bear on Christians to do things the way of the dragon and the beasts?**
6. **What strikes you about how the beasts and the dragon are defeated?**
7. **What lessons do these passages have for us today?**