

Westwood Baptist Church *Grounded. Growing. Going.*



Worship Guide for September 19, 2021

Sermon Notes

The Harlot and the Beast

Revelation 17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17

The reality of these verses is what we see before us in Revelation 17 and 18. We are entering the closing section of Revelation, and John records a vision for us that reveals two dramatically different storylines, two polar opposites. John is shown two cities, both of which are likened to women: Babylon the rebellious harlot (17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) and Jerusalem the faithful Bride (21:2, 9). One of them, the harlot, is alluring, enticing on the outside, but filthy and wicked on the inside. The other one, the bride of Christ, is majestic and holy, a radiant reflection of the glory of God. One will pass away violently under the judgment of God. The other will last forever in perfect fellowship and blessing from God. These represent two allegiances, two sets of values, two decisions, two ways to live.

Chapters 17 and 18 are John's vision of God's destruction of Babylon, "the great prostitute", who is "the mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations". John's readers in ancient central Asia would have immediately thought about Rome, which was personified and worshipped as a goddess. But in Revelation, she appears not as a goddess but as a harlot who seduces the world, drawing people into her idolatry, sensuality, and worldly wealth. She is a timeless symbol of all idolatrous nations or empires which persecutes and attacks Christ and his church, while at the same time seeking to seduce God's people away from him. The beast and his harlot are set on destroying God's people, but in the end, evil will turn in on itself as "Evil devours evil, because God has put it in their hearts to carry out his purpose". (Akin)

The future has been revealed; the outcome is clear: "the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings" (v 14). The question John poses to us is: where do you belong, where is your heart? Have you been seduced by the beast and his whore or are you faithful to the Lamb?

Come and See: The woman and the beast observed (Rev 17:1-6)

Hear and Understand: The woman and the beast interpreted (Rev 17:7-18)

Listen and Apply: Unbeliever, Christ has come to rescue you from Babylon – flee to him.

Christian, examine your life and the affections of your heart.

Church, God has made us ministers of rescue and reconciliation.

Weekly Discipleship Guide

Know

**What does God intend for me to know?
In your journal, use the following prompts to write
some truths that stood out from this week's message.**

I never knew...	I was reminded...	A question I still have...
I was challenged...	I was convicted...	A truth I could share...
I was encouraged to...		I need to dig deeper into...

Be (Consider)

**What does God's Word lead me to prayerfully consider?
In your journal, use the following questions to write
some prompts to use in praying through this week's passage.**

Is there a command to obey?	Am I convicted to confess any sin?
How am I compelled to exalt God?	Is there a sin to avoid?
Is there a promise to claim?	How do I need to rest in Jesus/the gospel?
Is there a principle to follow?	How can I pray for someone else?
Is there an example to follow?	What am I compelled to love or desire?

Do (Yield)

**How does God's Word call me to yield my life? In your journal, write
your answers and thoughts in response to the following questions.**

When examining your own heart, what are some of the things of this world that tend to distract you from God and his good plan?

The Kingdom of the beast cannot last. It fails to deliver on its promises of domination and victory. How have you seen the empty promises of sin and rebellion lead to ruin? In your own life? In our culture?

What comes to mind when you hear the word *vigilant*? Read Proverbs 4:23 together and discuss how our real pursuit of this verse's exhortation should look in our lives. How does Revelation 17 highlight the urgency of this task?

*Use this guide to help you internalize this week's message & to prepare for Life Group.

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