

LESSON 5

The Destruction of Babylon the Great — Revelation 17:1–19:5

Taught by Dr. J. Scott Duvall · Follow along with the video and fill in the blanks

17:1–6 — The Great Prostitute and the Scarlet Beast

The goddess is now portrayed as a great prostitute: Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth (17:5). Drunk on the blood of God’s holy people (17:6).

God is patient and slow to judge, but he will judge evil, and Babylon the Great will face his awesome wrath.

Applications for 17:1–6:

- We must resist the temptation to combine our Christian faith with “the world.”
- Pay attention to what is so bad about Babylon: (1) she rejects God through idolatry, (2) she promotes sexual immorality, (3) she selfishly uses people for her own economic pleasure, (4) she abuses and murders those who follow Jesus.

17:7–18 — The Interpretation of the Vision

The angel explains the mystery to John. The beast from the sea represents political, military, and economic power used in the service of Satan, often personified in a single wicked leader.

The riddle of 17:9–11:

The evil powers wage war against the Lamb (17:14), but the Lamb triumphs because he is “Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

The self-destroying power of evil: in 17:15–18 the beast and the prostitute turn on each other — “the wicked are not a happy band of brothers, but precisely because they are wicked they give way to jealousy and hatred” (Robert Mounce).

Applications for 17:7–18:

- The alliances of the wicked appear invincible but ultimately self-destruct.
- We need to pay attention to how we collude with ungodly power structures.
- God wins, and we participate by following Jesus faithfully. We fight by following.

18:1–8 — The Call to Leave Babylon

“Come out of her, my people,” so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues. (18:4)”

God’s judgment comes quickly — “in one day her plagues will overtake her” (18:8).

Applications: holiness means being separated to God — “my people” — and separated from the world system — “come out of her.”

18:9–19 — Three Funeral Laments

Three groups lament her downfall: the kings (vv. 9–10), the merchants (vv. 11–17a), and the mariners (vv. 17b–19).

The list of goods in 18:12–13 has 28 items in six categories: precious stones and metals, expensive fabrics, costly woods and building materials, spices and perfumes, foods, and animals and human slaves — this last one especially heartbreaking.

Applications:

- God cares not only about what we do, but what we condone, benefit from, or partner with.
 - The sinfulness of Babylon ultimately leads to a funeral service.
 - Human beings should never be reduced to commodities.
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18:20–19:5 — Rejoicing and Praising

The laments of 18:9–19 are contrasted with the rejoicing of the righteous. Notice the worshipers: heavens ... people of God ... apostles and prophets (18:20) ... great multitude (19:2–3) ... twenty-four elders and four living creatures (19:4) ... all his servants (19:5). Notice how they worship: rejoice ... shout ... Hallelujah ... Amen.

This passage both concludes 17:1–19:5 and introduces the final victory beginning in 19:6.

Applications for 18:20–19:5:

- A caution first: do not confuse rejoicing over God’s judgment of evil powers with delighting in the suffering of sinners. The celebration comes because God’s justice has finally been administered.
 - Resist the temptation to join in the sins of Babylon, alive and well today in her idolatry and immorality.
 - Continue to trust that God will bring justice on the earth. Pray for the persecuted church!
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Reference: The Symbolism of Colors

Duvall, Revelation, 102. Golden — divinity, splendor · White — victory, purity, resurrection · Rainbow — omnipotence · Red — slaughter, war, violence · Black — disaster, economic hardship, famine · Green — death · Blue — smoke · Yellow — sulfur · Fiery — judgment · Purple and scarlet — royalty