

I. “Come, let me show you why.”

- A. Chapter 17 ends the 4th chronological section and starts the 4th angelic explanation with an angel telling John that he would like to show him the why of what John just saw in the two previous chapters. John surely had many questions as he watched the angels pour out the bowls of wrath upon the Antichrist and his followers. John referenced three times that he wondered how men would not repent but rather blaspheme God and wage war upon Him as the bowls were poured out upon them. (Rev. 8:9, 11, 21)
1. How could men become so deceived and full of darkness that these severe judgments from God could not cause them to cry out for mercy? How could countless men and women become so deceived to gather together to fight against God and think they would win?
- B. One of the seven angels – This angel has first hand understanding of the why of this judgment upon the antichrist and his followers. He and his 6 companions had been prepared for this very hour in humanities story.
- C. “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters” – The angel explains to John that what the individuals they just poured out their bowls on are all part of something called the “the great harlot”, this harlot sits or rules over many waters. This great harlot has been interpreted as many organizations, kingdoms, since the time that John wrote down His vision. Here we must be careful to keep proper hermeneutics (the method of establishing meaning or truth from scripture) as we unpack what this could mean. We will look first to see if there is an explanation of this in the context of this chapter, then book, then the rest of scripture.

II. Interpreting the Symbols (Rev. 17:7-18)

- A. Immediately after showing John this great vision the angel breaks the symbolism down into it's literal elements. It is very important to our study that we understand these symbols and the literal things they represent or the following chapters will be very hard to understand. Some of these symbols are also referenced in earlier chapters of the book of Revelation so we will be doing some cross-references to those passages as well.
1. Wine – Symbolic of pleasures and joy. The context in which this symbol is used determines whether the pleasures are spiritual or fleshly. (Jer. 51:7; Zech. 10:7)
 2. Purple and Scarlett – Almost all passages where these symbols are used purple speaks of royalty, nobility and prominence, while scarlet speaks of luxury and wealth. (Judg. 8:26; 2 Sam. 1:21; Pro. 31:21-22)

3. The Beast is symbolic of the Antichrist (Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10) The False Prophet is called “Another Beast” (Rev. 13:11)
 4. Seven Heads are symbolic of the Seven Historical World Empires that persecuted Israel — Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and a future Empire. (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16)
 5. Ten Horns: are symbolic of a Ten Nation Confederation that will rule over their own nations while coming into partnership to serve under the Antichrist together. (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; 11:36-45; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16)
 6. Harlot Babylon: is symbolic of a Global Religious and Economic System that is demonically inspired and empowered by Satan, it almost always has a geographical locus as a base of influence. (Isa. 13-14; Jer. 50-51; Rev. 17-18)
- B. When I saw her I marveled greatly - The Greek word for “marvel” does not mean that John had questions or couldn’t quite figure out what this great vision meant. Rather it means that he was in jaw dropping astonishment at what he was beholding. The same word is used of individuals who saw the miracles that Jesus performed. This is significant in the context of everything that John sees in the book of Revelation. This is the only time he marvels.

III. Exegesis of the Harlot (Rev. 17:1-6)

- A. Harlot – The idea of an individual or group being identified by God as a “harlot” or committing “harlotry” can be very clearly defined as it is a major theme throughout the scriptures. It is used well over 100 times to speak of people giving the love and worship that belongs to God to something or someone else. This is not only wrong because of God’s supremacy as the only one worthy of such love and worship but even more personal that that, He loves them with all His heart and fights and died for their love as a bridegroom. (Book of Hosea)
- B. Sits on many waters – The angel tells John in (Rev. 17:15) that this Harlot has rulership and influence (sits) over many peoples (family groups or social groups), multitudes (groups gathered together without order), nations (ethnic groups), and tongues (national identities).
- C. Kings of the earth commit fornication – This speaks of multiple governmental leadership across the earth that will not just be influenced by harlotry but rather intimately connected. They will embody and promote a lifestyle of loving the fleshly pleasures and fallen values of this age, they will give no affection or worth to God.

1. In turn the entire earth's population will be inundated with harlotry and enticed by these leaders to give themselves to the fleshly pleasures of this age. John tells us they live everyday as though they are drunk and can't think or see clearly because they are inebriated by selfish ambition and fleshly desires. (Is. 24:20; Jer. 50:38, 51:7)

- D. Carried me away to the wilderness – The symbolism of the wilderness all throughout the scriptures speaks of the gentile nations or lands. This harlot will not find its epicenter in Jerusalem or Israel but rather it will have its base somewhere in the gentile nations and be a gentile system. (Ez. 20:35-36)

- E. Woman sitting on a scarlet beast – The term beast very clearly refers to the Antichrist in the rest of the book of Revelation. The angel tells us that this beast is the Antichrist in the following verses of the chapter as well (Rev. 17:8,11-13,17). The imagery of the harlot system sitting on the beast shows that he is under the influence of this system as well. He will be under this system and partake in it, I believe He will rise to power because He is a participant and a major promoter of the harlot ideological system.

- F. Arrayed in purple, scarlet, gold, and precious stones – A significant aspect of the harlot system that will envelope the globe in its luxury. We will look more at this in the chapter to come. For those in the earth who desire finical prosperity this system will be incredibly difficult to resist becoming intoxicated by it.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of Godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away.”
(2 Tim. 3:1-5)

- G. Even now the world and sadly some in the church are being prepared to embrace such a ideological system. This system will offer you happiness, peace, financial security, no judgment, and most of all an environment where you can pursue all your selfish desires. The only thing you have to give up to have it is your faith, biblical truth, and love for Jesus. (Ps. 37)

“Get behind me Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mar. 8:33-36)