

Message #42**Revelation 17:1-6**

Back in the year 2003, we went to war with Iraq. When that happened, I contacted a major news network in New York and asked them if they had ever considered the theological ramifications of this war. They said no. I said well there could be some serious Biblical matters at stake here. They asked me what. I said well there are four major chapters in the Bible that prophetically deal with this part of the world. I said I would recommend you contact Dr. John Walvoord in Dallas, who is probably the foremost prophetic expert on this subject. I gave them his number. Two days later, they brought him to New York and he was on national Television discussing the theological ramifications of Iraq and Baghdad, which was known in Biblical times by the name Babylon.

Next to the city of Jerusalem, there is no one city in the Bible that commands more attention than Babylon. The Bible mentions Babylon over 280 times.

There are four major chapters in the Bible that give very specific, prophetic detail to what will happen to Babylon just before the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ.

Two of the chapters are found in the O.T. in Jeremiah 50-51 and two of the chapters are found in the N.T. Revelation 17-18.

In the Bible, Babylon is used in five different ways:

- 1) It refers to a literal city.
- 2) It refers to an apostate religion.
- 3) It refers to a political power.
- 4) It refers to a geographical location.
- 5) It refers to a godlessness source.

Babylon has its historical roots in the book of Genesis. It began shortly after the flood. The city was originally named “Babel” and was originally built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9-10). False religion began in this city. It was a works-centered false religion that presented the idea that man could work his way to heaven. It was a proud man-centered religion that was not God-centered. The arrogance of that and the evil of that caused God to confound the languages of the people and split them up (Gen. 11:3-9).

In the 6th century BC the king in the Bible who really brought Babylon to its historical limelight was Nebuchadnezzar. He led the first of four great kingdoms to dominate Israel in what was called the “times of the Gentiles.”

He led a major campaign against Jerusalem and leveled the city and took captives back to Babylon (II Kings 25). It was to Babylon where Daniel was taken captive and it was from Babylon where Daniel prophesied and Daniel is so critical to this book of Revelation.

It was in this city of Babylon where King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that he be worshipped (Daniel 3). He set up a huge golden image and demanded that people fall down and worship it. Daniel predicted that major political powers would successively follow Babylon. He predicted that Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome would follow the Babylonian Kingdom in dominating Israel (Dan. 2:39-42).

When those powers replaced Babylon, Babylon was damaged, but it was not destroyed to the level God predicts in Jeremiah 50-51 or Revelation 17-18.

We have already carefully studied Jeremiah 50-51 and in these two chapters were a total of 50 specific predictions of what will happen to Babylon.

As we come to this text, we get to see the fulfillment of those predictions. **This judgment of Babylon occurs late in the final 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation just before Jesus Christ returns and brings to an end, the times of the Gentiles.**

AN ANGEL SHOWS JOHN THAT GOD HAS KEPT THE RECORD OF THE IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY THAT HAS COME FROM BABYLON AND HE WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY HER.

As 2022 began, Theophile Simon wrote an article titled this: “The New Iraq, Signs of Hope Amid the Rubble and Reconstruction.” In that article he said Iraq is coming back to life strong because of oil. He said the oil production is critical to the whole world.

We are living in a time when the stage is being set for what is described right here in Revelation: John gives a very graphic and detailed account of what he heard and saw in regard to Iraq. There are five specific details he gives us in these verses:

DETAIL #1 – One of the seven bowl angels came to John. **17:1a**

Let’s remember that the final seven bowl judgment angels are the last of the finale of the wrath of God. These seven angels are responsible for the seven last plagues that finish the wrath of God (Rev. 15:1).

They began their wrath judgment work in Revelation 16:1ff. They are seven holy angels who specifically have the responsibility to pour out the final wrath on earth prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

One of those wrath angels actually came to John. John saw this wrath angel personally, one on one. Now what that shows us all is that these wrath angels are no threat to God’s people. They are a dangerous threat to those who aren’t.

DETAIL #2 – One of the seven bowl angels spoke to John. **17:1b**

We are not told which one of the final seven angels were given the responsibility to speak to John, but John says one of them literally spoke to John. Again, we think this is a significant point. There is specific chronology to these events and John is actually seeing the things and speaking with angels who are involved in what is happening. These are not details coming from some mystical visionary.

These things were literal things John literally saw and heard. Since this is part of the final wrath program of God, it stands to reason that one of the angels would show it to John and explain it to John.

By virtue of the fact that one of these angels actually speaks to John, suggests this is a key point of the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation is entering a new phase in the prophetic plan of God. This is a key prophetic moment of which two chapters in Jeremiah specifically predict so when it finally arrives, this angel specifically is going to point things out to John for him to record for us.

DETAIL #3 – One of the seven bowl angels commanded John to come to where he was. **17:1c**

The Greek adverb “come” is one that invites John to come to where the angel is. John is the one who has to move to where the angel wants him to go. This angel wants John to go to him so he can show him something. This same word is used in Revelation 19:17 and 21:9. It is an invitation to go to some place other than where one is presently located.

We assume that John has been watching things unfold in Jerusalem and now he is going to be taken or transported to a new location in Babylon (Rev. 16:19).

Obviously, John cannot see what this angel wants him to see from where he was originally located. One other point of the chronology and that is the angel does not specifically name the object of wrath until **verse 5**. So prior to **verse 5**, he is giving this graphic description to John of this evil crescendo that builds until he specifically names it.

DETAIL #4 – One of the seven bowl angels said he would show him the judgment of the “great harlot.” **17:1d**

What this angel is specifically going to show John is the judgment and condemnation and annihilation of the great harlot.

The noun “harlot” is used four times in Revelation 17- 17:1, 5, 15, 16. The word “harlot” (pornhē) is one that refers to a prostitute who makes money by seducing or soliciting people to do immoral things (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 373-374).

The word is translated “whore” (KJV, NRSV), “harlot” (NASB, RSV) and “prostitute” (ESV, NIV, NET).

The adjective “great” means this harlot is the mega harlot of all harlots. This is the largest harlot to ever live. This harlot is a harlot above all others in immorality and influence. From a superlative level there is no greater harlot than this one. **There are three facts brought out about this harlot:**

Fact #1 - The harlot sits on many waters. **17:1e**

The fact that this harlot sits on many waters refers to at least two things:

- 1) She literally sits geographically on many waters and tributaries of the Euphrates River.
- 2) She has seductively infiltrated Gentile nations to turn away from God (Rev. 17:15).

This harlot has dominated and influenced the Gentile powers of the whole world.

Fact #2 - The harlot committed acts of immorality with the political leaders of the earth. **17:2a**

The word “immorality” means money and sex are involved. This harlot has had an impact on all major political leaders of the world by her enticements of money and sex. The vast majority of political leaders are not driven by a desire to honor God or glorify God. They are driven by a desire for power, money and sex.

Fact #3 - The harlot intoxicated the world with immorality. **17:2b**

Intoxicating immorality that has dominated the world started here. The word “drunk” means the world is drunk to an overflowing level with immorality. They literally are out of their minds and out of control in immorality. What is obvious is that God is holding this woman accountable for leading the world into immorality.

He is holding Babylon accountable for the immoral influence and profane lifestyle that has affected all nations of the world.

DETAIL #5 – One of the seven bowl angels carried John away. **17:3-6**

There are two specific facts brought out about this:

Fact #1 - He was carried away into a wilderness. **17:3**

John was very much aware of the fact that he was being taken to a remote, wilderness area.

Fact #2 - He saw a woman. **17:3-6**

Now this is the woman that is the great harlot who is responsible for all the immorality and idolatry of the world. We do not want to overlook the fact that John says “I saw” this.

This is the sequential “kai eidon” (kai eidon) formula. He was carried to the wilderness and next in the sequence, John saw this woman. He uses the noun for woman that indicates female.

There are twelve observations John makes about what he saw:

(Observation #1) - The woman was sitting on a scarlet beast. 17:3b

The noun “beast” is one that refers to a vicious, killer beast. This kind of beast is untamable and destructive. The word “scarlet” refers to a berry-colored red. This was the color of the robe put on Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:28). This was the color of wool used to sprinkle blood on the word of God, the property of God and the people of God for cleansing (Heb. 9:19-22).

This woman was completely clothed with the color of a robe that is linked to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God is holding her accountable as being the source of the attacks.

The noun “beast” is singular, so this is one beast who is the major political leader in charge of the evil being propagated in the world.

(Observation #2) - The woman had the support of the beast with blasphemous names. 17:3c

The noun names is plural and the word “blasphemous” means the names are all against God. Everything about this woman is against God, speaks against God and does things against God. She is completely covered with blasphemous names.

We are not told what the names are, but they are all names that slander God.

(Observation #3) - The woman had support of the beast with seven heads. 17:3d

The seven heads represent the fact that she is over seven kings. As we will see, the seven heads are seven kings that precede the beast. This seven head and ten horn fact is repeated word for word in 13:1. What this shows is that this harlot is closely connected to the beast. Immorality and idolatry will completely dominate the world in the Great Tribulation.

(Observation #4) - The woman had support of the beast with ten horns. 17:3e

The ten horns represent the fact that she is in charge of ten major political kingdoms. These ten kings are ten kings who are contemporaries with the beast.

We learn from Daniel’s prediction that the Antichrist will “parcel out land for a price” (Dan. 11:39). What that means is he will restructure the world and obviously there are these key political leaders who will be his puppets.

(Observation #5) - The woman was clothed with purple and scarlet. **17:4a**

It has been said that purple is the color of royalty and scarlet is the color of wealth. These were very expensive dyes that were luxuries. This woman will appear to have royal power and beauty.

The fact that this woman is clothed in purple and scarlet is no coincidence. This is the very color of the robe that was put on Jesus Christ just before His crucifixion. He was being mocked and mistreated while wearing this color of a robe (Matt. 27:28; Mark 15:17, 20). God has never forgotten about that moment. He never forgot about the history and the source of that evil that brought that moment into existence. God is holding this woman accountable for what happened to His own Son and she will pay the full brunt of His wrath for it.

(Observation #6) - The woman was adorned with rich gold. **17:4b**

She has what Grant Osborne said is the “opulent dress, wealthy demeanor, and gaudy jewelry” that has been taken from her lovers (*Revelation*, p. 611).

(Observation #7) - The woman was adorned with precious stones. **17:4c**

This harlot is rich at the ultimate level. The most expensive jewelry store in the U.S. is Harry Winston on 5th Ave. in New York. This store is known worldwide for its high end things. This woman will be adorned with it.

(Observation #8) - The woman was adorned with exquisite pearls. **17:4d**

This woman has wealth, power and beauty.

(Observation #9) - The woman had a gold cup in her hand. **17:4e**

The gold cup was full of abominations. The gold cup was full of unclean things. The gold cup was full of her immorality. She has tremendous religious, political and social influence. What is in the cup are abominations. The cup is overflowing with abominations.

(Observation #10) - The woman had a name written on her forehead. **17:5**

Now what we learn here is that at this point, a “mystery” is revealed about this woman. A mystery is something that is not known until God reveals it. By virtue of the names that are revealed here, what we learn is that God is revealing that it is now time for John and us to see what He is about to do; to whom He is about to do it and why He is going to do it. Her names tell the story and pinpoint this:

The name written was
“Babylon the great”;
“The mother of harlots” who produced the harlotry;
“The mother of the abominations of the earth” who produced all the abomination of the earth.

All of the immoral and evil things and all false religion that has ever happened stemmed from her and will be punished by God.

There have been all kinds of views concerning the identity of Babylon. All throughout history many have read this and have concluded it was some type of secret code for some other power other than Babylon.

View #1 - It refers to Rome.

Now these names that are given to this woman would seem to establish that this is not a reference to Rome. Rome did not give birth to idolatry. Rome did not give birth to immorality. Although Rome certainly was given to idolatry and immorality, it was not the mother of it.

View #2 - It refers to Jerusalem.

View #3 - It refers to United States.

View #4 - It refers to New York.

View #5 - It refers to Babylon that is Iraq.

This view says that this location, modern day Iraq, is the place that is responsible for all things that pulled people away from God into immorality and idolatry. This part of the world will be revived and will take front and center stage until God wipes her out. She will be rebuilt. It is said that right now there are 250,000 people living in Babylon. This allows for a literal interpretation and not figurative or symbolic interpretation.

We think that just as Jerusalem means Jerusalem, so Babylon means Babylon.

We do know that the Satanic arrogance of man, designed to leave God out, did start in this part of the world.

(Observation #11) - The woman was drunk with the blood of the saints. **17:6a**

The point of this is that she has drunk the blood of the saints by murdering them over and over again.

(Observation #12) - The woman was drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. **17:6b**

The same is true for those who testified of Jesus Christ.

John says when I saw this woman, I wondered greatly. John was astonished by what he saw. He was perplexed.

That war with Iraq was no coincidence. It was part of a plan that is very carefully laid out in Revelation.