

Revelation 17:1-18:24

In **Revelation 17-18** the major Tribulation theme focuses on the destruction of Babylon. Four main chapters of the Bible graphically describe this key prophetic event. Much of the specific detail comes from Jeremiah 50-51, but there are more observations we may make from this part of Revelation:

Observation #1 - Babylon is classified as “the” great harlot. **17:1-2, 5**

Four times in **chapter 17**, she is called a harlot - **17:1, 5, 15, 16**. Now a harlot is one who seduces or solicits people to do immoral things. When it comes to a harlot religion, it solicits and seduces people to move away from a true relationship with the true God.

In **verse 5**, Babylon is called the “mother of harlots,” which to me proves this is not some metaphor for Rome because Rome did not give birth to idolatrous religion and immorality. The place that literally gave birth to false religion was Babylon.

In **verse 1**, we learn that this great harlot “sits on many waters.” This refers to a couple of things:

First, this area literally does sit geographically on many waters and tributaries of the Euphrates. **Second**, her harlot seductions have infiltrated many Gentile nations to turn from God (**17:15**).

I do not think it is a coincidence that one of the fastest spreading demon religions is Islam. It is a satanic system of religion that is luring people far away from Jesus Christ and the truth of God. Politicians are defending it and even allowing it to be taught in schools. It is becoming the great harlot religion and this is not a coincidence, for this is all heading to this Tribulation judgment.

Observation #2 - Babylon will be a city initially controlled by the Antichrist. **17:2b-3, 7-8, 11**

When the Antichrist surfaces, he will not only enter into a peace treaty with Israel, but he will also have a close relationship with and the controlling power of Babylon.

Observation #3 - Babylon will be a headquarters for political power. **17:2-3, 9-13; 18:3**

Great political world leaders will visit this area and make it some sort of conference center. This will become a key center for a coalition of nations and this will become a major headquarters of political power during the Tribulation (**17:18**). Apparently, at some point, these world leaders will meet with the Antichrist and totally agree with an ecumenical alliance (**17:13**). These leaders know at this point that he has turned viciously against Israel and they are giving him their support.

Verses 10-11 clearly connect this to Israel. Since the foundation of the world (**17:8**), there are seven kings and powers that God would permit to totally dominate Israel and the world.

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According to **verse 10**, at the time John wrote Revelation, five of those powers had already fallen - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. One power existed at the time John wrote, which was Rome, and the other power to dominate had “not yet come.”

Now this power yet to come is the world power under the control of the Antichrist. In **verse 11**, the Antichrist is so destructive that when the final power is in place, he is given his own classification as the eighth power. The Antichrist will be connected to the final seventh power that will dominate Israel, but he is such an evil and diabolical monster that he is classified as the eighth dominate power of the world.

We learn here that he will have a connection to Iraq.

Observation #4 - Babylon will be a major economic headquarters. **17:4; 18:11, 15**

Many major business leaders of the world will begin to move into Iraq and eventually this will become a world headquarters for worldwide trade. Satan works in the world of big business.

Observation #5 - Babylon will be a city and power completely against God and God’s righteousness. **17:4-5, 14**

This will be an idolatrous and immoral place that hates Jesus Christ.

Observation #6 - Babylon will be a city that will hate and destroy God’s people. **17:6; 18:24**

We know from **verse 15** that many Gentile nations are connected to this power and all of them will try to destroy any person connected to God.

Observation #7 - Babylon will eventually be destroyed by her own allies. **17:16-17**

The ten major political powers who were once Babylon’s allied power will eventually turn against her. Undoubtedly Arabs will turn against Arabs and destroy each other.

Observation #8 - Babylon will be a completely satanic city. **18:2**

Dr. Charles Pak visited Iraq in 1975 and claimed he saw a service that worshipped Satan in a temple built by Saddam Hussein. Satan and his forces are confined to this earth and they will control Babylon. This will become his center of operations and a key place of demonic activity. Notice the kind of place Satan indwells - political, powerful, rich, immoral, and religious.

Observation #9 - Babylon will be evacuated by the righteous. **18:4**

Prior to Babylon’s destruction, God will give a Sodom/Gomorrah type warning to His people to get out: 1) So they do not participate in her sin; 2) So they do not participate in her judgments; 3) So they may testify of God’s terrible wrath judgments (Jeremiah 50:28).

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Observation #10 - Babylon will be the recipient of God's retributive wrath. **18:6-8**

God is going to completely judge Babylon with ferocious wrath for everything she has done in history.

Observation #11 - Babylon's destruction will cause the evil to weep and the righteous to rejoice. **18:9-23**

Political leaders who survive will weep (**18:9-10**). Business entrepreneurs who survive will weep (**18:11-17a**). **Heaven will celebrate** (**18:20-24**).

There have been those who have tried to suggest that the destruction of Babylon happened in 539 B.C. when it fell to the Medo-Persian Empire. However, this is easily proved false and is yet to occur:

- 1) **Revelation 17-18** is a Tribulation prophecy which has not yet occurred.
- 2) Medo-Persians attacked primarily from the east not from the north (Jeremiah 50:3, 9).
- 3) When Cyrus conquered Babylon he did not lay it to total waste and there are still inhabitants living there to this very day (Jeremiah 50:39-40; 51:29, 37, 43, 62).
- 4) Because there was not a major fleeing from the city when Cyrus attacked. In fact, Daniel remained in Babylon after it fell (Daniel 5:29, 30-31; 6:1-3).
- 5) Because when this happens there will be a uniting of Israel in her Promised Land (Jeremiah 50:17-20).
- 6) Because the destruction of Babylon is connected to the wrathful Day of the Lord which has not yet occurred (Isaiah 13:1, 6-13).

Keep your eye on Iraq, for she will play a key role in the Tribulation.

Revelation 19:1-21

As we come to this chapter, we actually come to the climax of the entire Bible. All eternity has been waiting for this wonderful moment when Jesus Christ comes in all of His glory to take over the world and put down all evil and finally reign on earth. The thing that starts this epoch moment is a great worship service.

Revelation 19:1-10

We will observe that four times in these ten verses the word “ Hallelujah ” occurs (**19:1, 3, 4, 6**). This is the only place in the N.T. where this word occurs. This particular word is used many times in the book of Psalms because the book of Psalms reveals much about the Kingdom reign of Jesus Christ.

The actual word “hallelujah” comes from two Hebrew words which literally mean “praise Jehovah.” It has been observed that this is one word that has the same meaning in almost every language. Perhaps the most famous use of the word is in Handel’s Messiah which was first performed on March 23, 1743. The Hallelujah Chorus is one of the most majestic moments in the entire musical.

There are three main praise services which begin this great finale:

Praise Service #1 - The praise of the great multitude in heaven . **19:1-3**

The first praise that is offered is praise by “a great multitude in heaven.” There is an article “the” before the noun heaven (the heaven), which means this is taking place at the Throne of God.

This particular praise service gets under way “after these things” (**verse 1**), which specifically refers to after Babylon has been completely obliterated. This special praise service occurs at the end of the Tribulation after chapters 17-18 have been fulfilled. At this point all false religions and idolatry and immorality have been annihilated and it is no wonder heaven is saying “hallelujah.” All heaven realizes that God is displaying His glory and power through the Tribulation judgment which is coming to its conclusion.

Now there are two specifically stated reasons for the praise:

(Reason #1) - Because God’s judgments are true and righteous judgments. **19:2a**

God’s judgments are true to the Word and true to His character and they are always right. God never sends a false emotional or irrational judgment. What He does is always right and true. There is a good lesson to see here and that is real praise is that which praises God for who He is and for what He does and not for what we think. J. Vernon McGee used to say, “If you don’t think God is doing right it is because you, not God, are wrong.”

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(Reason #2) - Because God's judgments are remunerative. **19:2b**

It is important here to recall Revelation 6:10 in which God's people coming out of the Tribulation were crying for vengeance. For nearly seven years at this point God's people have been murdered during the Tribulation. God at this point pays it back and there is rejoicing in heaven.

Praise Service #2 - The praise of the twenty-four elders and four living beings. **19:4-5**

When the great multitude praises God, the twenty-four elders and four living beings also join in with their own praise, "Amen, Hallelujah" which means "truly or of dogmatic truth praise Jehovah."

All of heaven is praising God for His ferocious judgment. There is harmony in this worship because God has pour out His wrath on a God-mocking, Christ-rejecting world.

Praise Service #3 - The praise offered by all people. **19:6-10**

Notice carefully **verse 6**; this is the moment when Jesus Christ begins to reign. This is the moment that was predicted in Psalm 97:1. All people break out in a praise that it is time for Jesus Christ to reign. Notice carefully from **verse 6** that Jesus Christ is identified as Lord, God, and the Almighty.

One of the specific reasons for this praise is that it is time for "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (**19:7, 9**). To understand this, we would like to ask and answer three questions:

Question #1 - When does this event take place?

This is the easiest question to answer. **Chronologically this takes place just after the destruction of Babylon and just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.**

Question #2 - What is the marriage supper of the Lamb?

The marriage supper of the Lamb is the final consummation of a relationship with Jesus Christ. A wedding ceremony in N.T. times feature three main events at three different locations:

- 1) There was the father's house where the bride lived.
Groom paid a dowry to the father and then went to prepare a home for her.
- 2) The route of travel from the father's house to the groom's house.
- 3) The marriage feast, which was the festival of many days which culminated with in the consummation of the bride and groom.

These events are crucial to our understanding this:

- 1) Jesus Christ paid the redemptive dowry for His bride at Calvary and is presently living in His Father's home, while His bride remained on earth. He is preparing a place for His bride.
- 2) Jesus Christ officially came for His bride at the Rapture (I Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-3).
- 3) Jesus Christ took His bride to His Father's house where there has been a seven year time of fellowship and feasting.
- 4) Jesus Christ is now going to consummate the relationship by bringing His bride back to earth to reign with Him. **This is the marriage supper of the Lamb.**

To be invited to travel back to earth with Jesus Christ for His Kingdom reign is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Question #3 - Who are the people involved in this marriage supper of the Lamb?

There are three main observations we want to make about those involved:

Observation #1 - These are believers who have been made themselves ready. **19:7b**

We believe that this is a reference to the Church (i.e. Rev. 3:21). We believe this is a reference to the fact that they have been made ready by believing on Jesus Christ and by the Bema Seat Judgment. The part the believer played in making themselves ready is the works they did after salvation.

Observation #2 - These are believers who had done righteous works. **19:8**

The righteousness described here is not imputed righteousness of justification, but the righteous acts righteousness. We receive imputed righteousness the moment we believe in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9). After this imputed righteousness, we begin to do righteous or unrighteous things which determine our rewards or loss of rewards.

It is interesting is that the verb "it was given" is aorist passive and refers to the imputed righteousness given by God at the moment of justification. However the "clothing of oneself" refers to the righteous acts and faithfulness of the believer.

Observation #3 - These are believers who have been invited. **19:9**

It would seem from other parallel passages such as Matthew 22:1-10 and Luke 14:5-24 that the vast majority of those invited are Gentiles, not Jews.

Verse 9 establishes the fact that "blessed" are those who are invited to return with Jesus Christ to reign with Him on this earth.

One question which would naturally arise from this is whether or not it would be possible to be a believer who would not be invited to make this trip with Jesus Christ? It would seem from previous passages that the possibility of not reigning with Jesus Christ is very real (Rev. 2:26-27). Would it be possible to be a believer in Jesus Christ and not be able to return with Him when He comes to reign? The answer appears to be yes.

The Bible never calls the unbeliever to do good works for the works are as filthy rags. The Bible calls the unbeliever to do only one thing - believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

However, the Bible calls the believer to do righteous works. For example, the believer is to present himself a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1); the believer is to flee immorality (I Cor. 6:18) and to be obedient so that we may not fall short of entering the final rest of God (Heb. 4:22). If we are going to reign with Jesus Christ, we must be found faithful (I Cor. 4:1-2). We must hold fast to our assurance through a life of faithfulness (Heb. 3:14) so that we may receive full reward (Heb. 10:35). All who remain faithful until the final hour will share in the Kingdom reign (Luke 19:12-27).

The idea of not inheriting the Kingdom is developed in three main Church Age passages:

- 1) I Corinthians 6:9-10 - the criteria for non-inheritance is a life that is given to immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, covetousness, drunkenness or swindling.
- 2) Galatians 5:21 - the criteria for the inheritance is not having a flesh-controlled life that manifests flesh works (5:19-21).
- 3) Ephesians 5:5 - the criteria for not having an inheritance is a life of immorality, impurity, covetousness or idolatry.

We believe this is precisely the point of Hebrews 12:12-17. One who does not make righteous adjustments in life will not “see the Lord” when He reigns on earth. He will not be invited to share in this righteous reign of Jesus Christ.

Now when **Revelation 19:9** says “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” and “These are the true words of God,” the words stand. All who will be invited have a Kingdom inheritance coming when Jesus Christ comes to reign.

According to **Revelation 19:10**, when John saw this and considered this, he was so overwhelmed that he fell down at the feet to worship the angel who had revealed all of this to him. The angel says something that is very critical to all of Biblical prophecy and that is Jesus Christ is what Biblical prophecy is all about. God is to be worshipped, Jesus Christ is to be worshipped, because all Biblical prophecy is about Jesus Christ.