

THE DESTINY OF WORLD RELIGION

Revelation 17

How could God allow bad things to happen to people He loves?

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Some people think there is no answer—they give up in despair.

A loving, all-powerful God couldn't let it happen!

Therefore, God must be less than loving.

Or, God must be less than all-powerful—or at least He has decided to act that way!

Revelation was written to answer our doubts.

It gives us a glimpse of the throne room—We can see the Judge—no question about His power!

It shows us the end of the story—no question about His love!

—no question about how it all turns out!

Addressed to God's people in the midst of suffering for His sake.

Purpose:

1. To encourage God's people when we suffer on account of our faith.
2. To inform us of outcome of conflict we're participating in.
3. To motivate us to remain faithful in spite of affliction.

Theme:

Christ, as Judge over the Universe, is judging His creation.

God is in control! HE WINS!

Although His people may suffer, God even controls those in rebellion.

He'll be victorious. The faithful participate in His victory.

1. **Things you've seen: Christ the Judge 1**
2. **Things which are now: The Judge judging the churches 2-3**
3. **Things which shall be later: The Judge judging the nations 4-22:5**

4-11 God's Program

CAUSE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT: SATAN'S PROGRAM 12-18

Satan's program presented 12-13

Satan's opposition to God and to the people of God

Satan's attempt to destroy God's "anointed One"

Satan's expulsion from heaven and vengeance on earth.

Satan's "anointed one" and his prophet.

Satan's program recompensed 14:1-18:24 God's response

Judgment of participants in Satan's program 14:6-18:24

After revelation of judgment on all mankind, messenger takes John to see 2 specific effects of judgment (17-18).

1st deals with Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes.

Who is supporting her? What happens to that support system?

Answers key question they're asking—God answers suffering church:

Where's affliction coming from? What's God going to do about it?

JUDGMENT OF THE PROSTITUTE 1-2

Messenger calls John to see what God does to the prostitute.

God judges the great prostitute

who commits adultery with pagan kings and peoples.

Parallels other passages that point to Babylon (Shinar) as object of God's judgment.

Origin of human religions which oppose God's plan.

Throughout history its role has been significant (cf. Gen. 10:8-10).

Whether you consider this to be restored Babylon—as Saddam Hussein has proposed—or other modern city—prostitute city proposes tribute to man— self-centered religion which exalts our abilities and leaves God out!

Seduced by power . . .

Seduced by possessions and pleasure . . .

Seduced by worship of self and an “I-can-do-it-myself” philosophy . . .

God ultimately judges the prostitute!

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROSTITUTE 3-6

Supported by pagan world system (the beast) 3

Dressed up in fancy garments 4a –external appearance looks great!!

Wealthy supporters treat her well!

Fancy golden cup is full of abominable things 4b –abominations/adulteries

Title identifies her as mother of all abominations 5 –religious and otherwise!

Not clear whether “mystery” describes title or Babylon!

Is it the name that hasn't yet been revealed?

Or is it the nature of this Babylon itself people don't understand?

–lot of confusion about what world religion is about? What's role of religion in history?

Drunk with shed blood of martyred saints 6

Religious system, composed of ecumenical and syncretistic union of religions.

She's identified with slaughter of the faithful –their witness is sealed with their blood!

At last we see: she's source of suffering of the faithful!

System causing suffering is under God's control and will be judged!

She has had her fill of the blood of faithful people—but now, *the Judge has the last word!*

EXPLANATION OF THE PROSTITUTE 7-18

John is amazed at what he sees 7a

Messenger explains its significance 7b-18

Prostitute is supported by pagan world system 7b-14

Supported by political system of nations descended from Rome 7-8

Pagan nations support man-centered religious system.

**Beast once existed
ceased to exist**

Goes away—passes through period of non-existence.

Influence wanes from John's day into future—but the beast will rise again!

Satan's power energizes the beast—and it will rise again.

is restored to existence 8a

Beast comes from the abyss 8b –his authority and power is Satanic

Beast will be destroyed 8c

People are impressed by the beast 8d

. . . impressed by what they see!

. . . impressed by the sequence of events—its demise and restoration.

. . . presentation is impressive

One group *isn't* impressed: names written in book of life!

7 heads represent 7 pagan empires that have ruled over the earth 9-10

3rd reference to this figure (Dan. 7; Rev. 13; and here)

7 mountains = 7 kings (Dan. 7—“mountains” refers to kingdoms)

7 are called “hills”, referring to gentile nations that have ruled over Israel.

* 1st C. readers probably made connection with “City on 7 hills” = Rome.

* Middle ages–church identified it with Rome = R.C. Church

* More recent history: = ecumenical movement 9/11 = Muslims

* Future events may bring other candidates.

* It may be . . . Babylon! (literally!) (Amazing how God does things like that!)

Empires, rather than literal hills: 5 pagan empires have threatened Israel’s survival

Five of them have already fallen (in John’s day):

Egypt

Assyria

Babylon

Medo-Persia

Greece

One nation in power during John's time–has to be Rome.

Seventh is yet to come:

alliance of nations descended from Rome (Dan. 2 & 7).

8th impressive king will arise in the future 11

– descends from seventh and establishes his own rule

7 heads are 7 empires in succession; all part of same beast (Rev. 13)

(= Gentile world system)

Final world power involves cooperative alliance of 10 kings 12-14

-10 horns--independent nations of future alliance

Didn’t exist when John wrote

They reign for a brief time 12a

Their authority is associated with the beast 12b

They share one united purpose 13a

They voluntarily give their authority to the beast 13b

They attempt to defeat the Lamb 14

They make war against Him 14a (Ps. 2)

They want to destroy Him–and all His faithful followers!

In spite of their best attempts, they aren’t able to destroy them!

The Lamb defeats them 14b

He defeats them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings!

He’s greater than all the kings of the earth!

Those who are faithful triumph with Him! 14c

They will be destroyed.

Before that happens, God uses them to judge and destroy the religious system

Prostitute destroyed by pagan world system 15-18

She sits in the midst of the pagan peoples of the world 15

Beast turns and destroys her 16

Source of her power and wealth–her support system– turns on her.

Beast is God’s instrument to fulfill His purpose 17 (Zech. 5)

Agreement to give authority to beast provides means by which **God judges the prostitute–man’s great religious system.**

Beast wants nothing to do with *any* religious system–except that which worships HIM!

Even self-centered purposes of beast are used by God to accomplish His purposes!

His will is done! He destroys man-made, self-centered religion. *He wins!*

The prostitute who controls the kings of the world

will be destroyed by the kings of the world 18

Ultimately city itself is destroyed—leads into 18—political center also destroyed.

That's it! That's the answer to the nagging question: how could an omnipotent God allow His people to suffer like that.

That was Daniel's question too! How can the beast overcome God's people—even for a *little while*?

God's plan to overcome the world includes this beast—the world's political system becomes the means by which God judges man's religious system. It turns on itself!!!

God wins—those who are faithful triumph with Him!

Temporary affliction we're going through isn't the end of the story.

In comparison to the eternal glory which will be ours, the momentary light affliction—though it seem incredibly hard—and goes on forever—by contrast to that glory—it's NOTHING!

Danger of being sucked in by the world's religious system.

It always looks impressive. It's end is destruction.

Those who are faithful to the Lamb will be opposed and oppressed by world religions and political pressure.

But—the Lamb wins!!!

Prostitute and world system are destroyed.

Those who are faithful triumph with Him!

=> FAITHFULLY FOLLOW THE LAMB!