

(Scriptures quoted from New King James Version, unless noted otherwise;
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The passage of Revelation 17-18 starts with John the apostle's spectacular vision of two great empires: one symbolized as a *Harlot* and the other as a *Beast*. (17:1-6) Guiding angels then take over to explain the monumental struggle between these two great empires; they focus mainly on the catastrophic downfall of the *Harlot*. (17:7-18:24)

Although he didn't understand it so well, the apostle was blessed with a most unusual glimpse into the future - at the world's geopolitical situation in the End of the Age era of history. That means our present day, so it behooves us to understand clearly the meaning of this astounding prophetic message in the *Book of Revelation*.

This is not just an allegory depicting vague spiritual realities. It is a symbolic picture, yes, but one that points to specific historical realities, forming on the world stage before our very eyes. The following posts will explain how the final manifestation of the *Great Harlot*, and the *Beast*, are showing up in our present day.

This passage in Revelation 17-18 offers a remarkable example of God's amazing foresight; 2,000 years in advance He knew what was going to happen and gave His apostle a dramatic glimpse of this future scenario

that would play out shortly before His Second Coming.

As we learn how accurately the puzzle pieces fit our present historical situation, we are greatly encouraged. For it lends certainty that other glimpses into the future will also come to pass. Those visions that describe righteous government on Earth, and Heaven itself becoming part of Earth's landscape and topography, are not just vague spiritual realities; they are destined to become rock-solid reality. (Revelation 20-22)

Anyway, getting back to the subject of the *Harlot*, in this passage God uses terms similar to how He sometimes depicted ancient Israel. The symbolic language depicts this *Great Harlot* empire as one founded on godly principles; but in time became a *Harlot...* and a great offense in the eyes of the Almighty.

For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.... (Revelation 18:5)

All the signs point specifically to the American empire as the fulfillment of this prophetic revelation given to John the apostle. (For more information about how America has transformed over the years into her present *Harlot* state, see [Appendix 4](#) and [5](#).) That is the specific focus, but the revelation also has a general application; and this will be the first subject of discussion.

God's viewpoint could be compared to a multi-functional camera that shifts from broad-angle view to telescopic view to microscopic view, and even seems to combine different views into one. In this revelation the broad and specific views seem at times to be viewed simultaneously. The *Book of Revelation* pictures the *Great Harlot* as having extended throughout the panorama of history and over the entire Earth, yet at the same time focuses specifically on one particular nation (America) in one particular era (the End of the Age).

We first hear about the *Great Harlot* in chapter 14 where she is referred to as "*Babylon... that great city*" - along with an inkling of the fate that is to befall her: "*Babylon is fallen.*" And why? "*Because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication*" (14:8) - meaning that her oppressive policies and bad influence have corrupted and

damaged the rest of the world. And for this, God will have no other recourse but to allow her to “fall”.

This echoes the history of ancient Israel; she had become a *Harlot* in God’s eyes - unfaithful to her Husband and a bad example to surrounding nations - and as a result had to endure the ravages of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions.

Then in chapters 17-18 the Lord gives His apostle a sort of flashback, and a good deal of explanation, to reveal what was meant in chapter 14 about “*Babylon... that great city*”. Significantly, “*Babylon*” takes on the added identification of “*great harlot*” and “*the woman*” who “*is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.*” (17:1,18)

To better understand what “*great harlot*” means, it will help to look at what she isn’t, what she’s trying to imitate and counterfeit: the real thing, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And what do we mean by the Kingdom of Heaven? Well, it’s a great multi-faceted thing - beyond description or understanding. But God has given glimpses of it, such as in the description of the Heavenly City in the final two chapters of the Book of Revelation. Its beauty and splendor stretch far beyond human imagination or experience: the presence of God gives it light; the trees of healing are there, and all manner of delights, ecstasies, and things we can barely imagine right now. It is compared to “*a bride adorned for her husband.*” (21:2)

From God’s viewpoint, the *Harlot*, whose inhabitants are wrapped up in the spirit of Materialism, is a pitiful substitute for the true *Bride* - those who love God and do what they can to follow Him. The world’s city system is but a feeble attempt by the forces of Darkness to mimic the reality which will exist one day on planet Earth. Being a sort of worldly utopia and by imitating Heavenly realities, the world’s cities have become an enticement against and substitute for what God has to offer in the future.

All through history, this *Harlot* has been drawing her captives away from God’s presence, enticing them through her Materialism. The cheap trinkets of this world are visible and easy to grab, but the true gold of God’s Kingdom is less visible to our earthly senses during the present

Age; so we tend to neglect it.

This *“woman”*, the *Harlot* empire, has her citizens, her loyal followers and inmates. But interestingly and by way of contrast, the Revelation Book portrays another *“woman”*, engaged in a life and death struggle with *“the great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.”* (12:1-17) She is portrayed elsewhere as the *“wife... of the Lamb... arrayed in fine linen... [symbolic of] the righteous acts of the saints.”* (19:7-8)

This *Woman*, the *Wife of the Lamb*, who is battling the forces of Darkness, stands in sharp contrast to *“the great harlot”* and her *“inhabitants”* swallowed up in Darkness (*“drunk with the wine of her fornication”*) along with *“the kings of the earth”* (who have *“committed fornication”* with her). (17:1-2) Although in the eyes of humankind, cities have their appeal, from a spiritual perspective in God’s eyes they are cesspools of corruption and greed.

And what is an old whore in comparison to the resplendant *Bride of Christ*? And what is any worldly city in comparison to the Heavenly City of the Almighty?

Well, it’s bad enough that this world’s whorish system is such a mockery and cheap imitation, dragging the world into worship of Materialism. But it goes further; this *Harlot* is responsible for the deaths of untold numbers of people, including those who are the *Bride of Christ*. *“In her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”* (18:24)

It is apparent then that, besides her commercial power, the *Harlot* possesses a great deal of military strength, which she uses to destroy great numbers of those who try to resist her control. This combination of military-political and economic-commercial power has characterized all the empires of history and is true of this *Great Harlot* empire as well. In that respect this worldly system, in spite of her veneer of Christianity, is no better than the *“beasts”* (the tyrannical, political-military empires) that have come and gone throughout history.

“The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.”

(1Peter 4:17) That Scripture applies well to the American nation, which has departed so far from the ways of God. And that is what these chapters in *Revelation* portray, with their description of this future *Harlot* society receiving its correction under the heavy hand of God's chastisement.

Thankfully, right after chapters 17-18 about the *Harlot's* destruction, we get a glimpse of contrasting scenes in Heaven: the "*marriage supper of the Lamb*", whose "*wife*", the true Bride of Christ, is rewarded for her faithfulness and dedication to her Husband and to all that is true, right, and loving. (19:7-9)

What we have then in these Revelation chapters (14, 17-19, 21-22) is a symbolic portrayal of two women: 1) The Bride: God's people and their (future) dwelling place - the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth 2) The Harlot: the world's people and their current dwelling place - a counterfeit utopia, manufactured and presided over by the forces of spiritual Darkness.

So far, we have seen that the Scriptures seem to issue a strong indictment against the *Harlot* society. And we may wonder, is the modern city system all that bad, and specifically, has the American empire descended to such depths? These are legitimate questions, which the following posts will try to clarify.

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