

# Bible Study #28

4/26/22

# Revelation 16

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

# Revelation 16

- **Revelation 16:19** *“we also hear the great **city** was split into three parts,...and God remembered the great Babylon”*
  - We will see the word “great” in two places in the same sentence
  - **Revelation 17** will tell us that “the woman” is the **great city** (no doubt at this point)
  - Father pointed out that Revelation has a few places where it is hard to follow the message since we are not now living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century
  - But, the vast majority of the book is easy to follow if we know our Old Testament (especially the Prophets of **Daniel** and **Ezekiel**)

# Revelation 17

From Father Sebastian's Parish Presentation

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- Father started his discussion of **Revelation 17** by pointing out how we hear about this **harlot**, who is “sitting on many waters,” and who is also described as this “woman sitting seated on the beast, bedecked with gold, and jewels and pearls”
- If we remember our Old Testament, we should immediately be able to identify who this woman is
- **Isaiah** tells us about a harlot who was drunk with the blood of God’s people, and who persecuted them, and was bedecked with jewels and gold
- She also fornicated with the nations
- This could be understood to mean that she is the **City of Jerusalem**

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- **Jeremiah 1 & 2, Ezekiel, and Hosea** refer to the **City of *Jerusalem*** as the “great harlot”
- Many scholars argue that *Jerusalem* was the bride of God who turned into a prostitute and persecuted God’s people
  - Remember *Jerusalem* at the time of Solomon
  - Also, *Jerusalem* was seen in **Revelation 13** (was all about the number **666**) etc.
- Father suggested that (as we will see), the argument that the “woman” was *Jerusalem* is the strongest of the historical positions

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- However, as discussed earlier, other scholars believe that the woman (sitting on the beast, and upon many waters) is referring to the **City of Rome**
- She is called *Babylon the great*, the mother of harlots, the persecutor of God's people
- She is drunk with the blood of the saints (this should remind us of **Daniel 7:5**)<sub>1</sub>

# Revelation 17



# Revelation 17

- **Revelation 17:1-6** *“Then one of the seven angels...When I saw her I marveled greatly”*
- Someone “drunk with the blood of the saints” was someone who persecuted the early church (First the Jewish authorities and later the Roman Empire)
- As mentioned, this woman can be identified in one or two ways
- One, is that this **a woman** seated upon the seven-headed beast (which was understood as the Roman Empire) could be “the beast from the land,” later called the “false prophet”
- The woman from the land and the false prophets are the same thing

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- This makes sense if we go back to **Revelation 13 where it says** that the beast gave its power over to the beast from the land in order to get people to worship it
- This would mean that the woman riding on the back of the beast would be **pagan religious authorities of Asia Minor**
- Another interpretation sees the woman riding on the back of the beast were **the Jewish religious authorities of Jerusalem** who were using the power of the Roman Empire to persecute the Christians (remember “we have no king of Caesar” **John 19:15\***)<sub>2</sub>
- *Judea* was a vassal state under Rome
- Father said it did not really matter which you select as long as it is seen within this historical context

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- One reason the woman is identified as the Jewish religious authorities is that she is called “the great city” in **Revelation 16:19\*** <sub>3</sub>
- Many scholars think of the great city as *Rome*, and certainly *Nero* was persecuting the Christians
  - But, as we will see, it might also be a reference to *Jerusalem*

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

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# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- **Revelation 17: 6-10** *“When I saw her I marveled greatly”*
  - This is another example of an interchange between the seer (telling the story) and an angel (Also seen in **Ezekiel** and **Daniel**)
  - No matter which position you take concerning the identity of the woman (Jerusalem or Rome), the beast is the Roman Empire
  - The only debate is concerning the identity of this rider of the beast (Father discussed how one uses the power of a horse as a rider)

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- The **seven heads** (also in **Rev 13:1**)<sub>4</sub> are the **seven hills** on which the woman (this city) is seated
- Those who propose that the woman was the City of *Rome* jump on this statement as proof
- Unfortunately, most today know this about Rome due to the Roman influence on our culture
- The 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians were equally aware that *Jerusalem* was a city built on seven hills (as were many other ancient cities)

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- Father read us an account by *Victorinus* who wrote the oldest commentary on the **Book of Revelation** in 350 AD \*
- This creates a major obstacle for those who believe the book was written at the time of *Nero* (October 54 – June 68) rather than the time of *Domitian* (October 51 – September 96)

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- **Revelation 17:11-15** *“As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven,...are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues”*
  - Here, the author makes it easy to identify the beast as the Roman Empire which consisted of a collection of many waters, many nations, and peoples
  - One can even break it down by the names of the 10 horns (who were the kings – Caesars)
  - But, we still see “the woman” using the might and power of the beast (Roman Empire) while riding on its back



# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- **Revelation 17:16** *“And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot...and burn her up with fire”*
  - Once again, those who identify with *Rome* jump on this passage about “fires” to relate to the fire caused by Nero (although many ancient cities were also destroyed by fire)
  - According to those who see the city as *Jerusalem*, there are two major problems with the Rome theory
    - **First**, as we saw in **Revelation 16:19**,<sup>5</sup> the city was split into three parts (division usually results in destruction)

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- If we return to **Ezekiel 5:1-2** <sup>6</sup> we see *Jerusalem* being divided and later destroyed in three parts
- **Revelation 16:19** refers to the Great Babylon being divided into 3 which should also make us think of *Jerusalem*
- Further, the woman was described in **Revelation 17:4** <sup>7</sup> as being bedecked with jewels, and drunk on the blood of the saints
- As mentioned earlier, the Old Testament screams about *Jerusalem* as being the great harlot (**Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel**)
- Second, the city of *Babylon* is described as the great city

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- **Revelation 17:17-18** *“for God has put it into the hearts to carry out his purpose...And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth”*
  - Father pointed out that the proponents for the City of *Rome* claim this is another point in their favor
  - It is pretty obvious that *Rome* had power over the kings of the earth
  - But, since Revelation was written for 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians, we need to look at **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 4:34**, <sup>8</sup> where it says that *Jerusalem* had power and authority over the kings of the earth

# Revelation 17 (Cont)

- Again, Father believes that “the great city” (based on the information in **Revelation 11:8**) we have already heard about being destroyed is *Jerusalem*
- Further, **Ezekiel 16:46** <sup>9</sup> refers to *Jerusalem* as *Sodom*
- But, the smoking gun is the statement that it was the city where their “lord was crucified”
- Thus, if the woman seated on the beast is *Jerusalem* of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, who was a great persecutor of Christians and was destroyed by God, we can conclude that this was happening during the reign of the emperor *Domitian*
- This is one more example of the cycles described in **Daniel 7:21-22**
- Next we will look briefly at **Revelation 18** \*