

Summary Notes for chapters 17-18

1. The big question that comes with these chapters is that as to whom is being judged. Some argue for two babylons: a religious system in chapter 17 and a humanistically minded commercial system in chapter 18. Others argue for one identification: the religious system which seeks to control all aspects of life without regard to the will of God. I favor this latter system but it is a point where godly persons have disagreed and we should not enter into judgment on one another. My notes are geared to a "one babylon" view and it can be argued heatedly. But if others favor another understanding, I feel 'no basic hostility and no need for pressing my own views. Most things in the chapter will be equally meaningful to all.

2. What is plain is that the religious system in chapter 17 is wedded to the worldly order of the beast. The concept is that a world religion and a world government rule over the affairs of all men. This tends to make them oppressors and put most of the world in fear before them.

3. That the scarlet woman is a religious system is simply in keeping with biblical type. She is given the titles of the mystery religions in 17:5 and shown in the mastery of many persons in 17:15. In my concept the picture in chapter 18 merely shows how far a "church" can wander from its intended purpose when it becomes involved with the merchandise of the world. We are usually quick to identify the system as Rome due to the language of 17:9. But it seems better to see it as a world system of which Rome will likely be the head. As such it persecutes true believers (17:6) and has generally not helped the testimony (18:24) because as a system not yielded to the will of God the obvious course is to trouble those who are yielded. The league with the world powers should not surprise us...the modern ecumenical movement is already calling for that.

4. The nations that are loyal to the beast combine in making war on the Lamb as well as his people (17:14). As they have difficulty with this, they will turn on the religious system...there can be but one supreme ruler at a time...and destroy her. The loss to the world in terms of merchandise is appalling.

5. The call of 18:20 is striking as the host in heaven are called upon to rejoice at the enactment of God's justice on what has stood against them. This is often seen in Revelation and it is one of the notes of the last age that the vengeance of God is accomplished to the satisfaction of all His people...both those here and those with the Lord in glory.

6. But the call of v. 4(18) is also notable. The people of God are to have nothing to do with this system. I have always thought that vs 4-5 were almost parenthetical and were addressed to the church and to its people at any time. The will of God is that His own should not be involved in a system whose sins pile up to heaven and whose evil is known worldwide. In keeping with our fifth note and with the reference to the patience and faith of the saints, it is interesting to see that God does not overlook or miss the harm done to His own in this scene. He will, in fact, call it forth for judgment on these responsible. We may not see equity now...but it will come and those who are "called, chosen, and faithful" (17:14) will agree to it and all God does.