

Lesson 21
Revelation 17
The Final Destruction of World Religion

Memory verse: "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy." (Proverbs 29:1)

Chapter 17 deals with the destruction of the final world religion. Human beings are religious. They are worshipers by creation, by nature. They will worship something somewhere and that is because God made them to be worshipers. He made them to reach out to something beyond themselves, namely the supernatural, specifically Himself. He made them with a longing and a restlessness and a desire and a capacity to relate to Him as the divine Creator. That is why it is correct to say that man is restless until he finds his rest in God. Man was made with a God-shaped vacuum that only God can fill. He is an incurable worshiper who will bow inevitably at some shrine, if not the true God then gods of his own inventions.

Since the fall of man recorded back in the third chapter of Genesis when he rebelled against God, God cursed man. And because man was cursed, because he is now by nature sinful, his nature has been perverted and so that innate longing to know God has been twisted. Man still reaches out for the supernatural but no longer does he long for the true God. In fact the Bible says no man seeks after God. His residual religiosity makes him long for some deity, but it's usually a deity that accommodates somehow his sinfulness. And now his need for a relationship with God is corrupted because of his love of sin. And so as Romans chapter 1 describes it in very clear terms, "Even though they knew God they did not honour Him as God or give thanks but they became futile in their speculations, their foolish hearts were darkened, professing to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image."

It is characteristic of the fallen man that his built-in longing for God is corrupted. He is hopelessly religious. He is a worshiper. But he does not any longer seek the true God. If a relationship with the true God is ever to be consummated, the true God must seek him for man no longer seeks God.

Playing on this religious bent, this desire for someone or something to worship, Satan and his demons then energize false religion. False religion is extremely popular. It accommodates man's perverted longing without bringing him under the authority of the true God. Satan goes into action disguised, as 2 Corinthians 11 tells us, and his disguise is as an angel of light and his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

So you have man with a perverted desire to worship. He looks for any God but the true God, not wanting to bring himself under the authority and the power and the rule of the true God, he invents some kind of deities that are spawned by Satan himself out of what the Apostle Paul calls doctrines of demons and seducing spirits. So you have all over the world, for the most part, a rejection of the true God and in His place a myriad of false deities.

Rebellious, then, against the true God, man is a partner of Satan and Satan's demons and forces in the development of damning religious enterprises. Wonderfully, graciously and mercifully, though man does not any longer seek the true God, the true God seeks man. And immediately after the Fall, God began to look for man, to bring him back, to redeem him from sin and death and false religion. But Satan wages a constant war against that divine enterprise, a campaign to get people lured into and trapped in false systems that worship not the true God but some abomination claiming to be God.

Because this is so much a part of the fabric of human life, we're not surprised to see it come to a head in the last days. Just as everything else reaches a sort of final form in the end, false religion will reach its culminating form as well. In the last days of man on earth, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ in a period of time known as the Great Tribulation when the wrath of God is being poured out on the world, there will be a culminating of all of Satan's anti-god schemes, including one great universal final form of world religion. All the several separated parts of satanic religion will come together in one great world religion.

Things to learn: 1) Impact of False Religion. 2) Drivers of False Religion 3) Judgement on False Religion

Discussion questions:

1) What does the woman who is known as a despicable prostitute stand for in the chapter?

Q2. Why did God judge the woman who is also known as "Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of earth?"

Q3 The beast energises the woman and what do you think is their ending as foretold in this chapter?