

REVELATION

ALL • THINGS • NEW

UPSTATE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Week 11 – March 18-24 – *Revelation 17-19:10*

LEADER NOTES

While these three chapters are heavily debated, it is central to understand that sin has broken everything and that only Jesus will satisfy. As Christ-followers, we can celebrate knowing that one day, sin and death will themselves be destroyed.

Please remember to ask your groups about gospel connections and conversations had in the previous week. Also, please be sure to emphasize inviting those around us to our Easter services. You can complete the form [here](#).

COMMUNITY

Open the group by caring for one another and allowing a moment for everyone to have a place to belong.

Start the group by taking prayer requests, finding out about people's week, and praying for one another.

Ice-Breakers:

- *Who's your pick for March Madness this year?*
- *Does anybody have any funny sports or basketball stories?*

SCRIPTURE

Take this time to study the Bible together. Remember, the goal is not just to convey information, but to help people in your group learn to read the Bible for themselves.

THE POINT

Everyone worships something, but not everything is worthy of worship.

Revelation 17

The Great Prostitute and the Beast

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." 3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. 5 And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." 6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly. 7 But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her."

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. 9 This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; 10 they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. 11 As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. 12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. 13 These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. 14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” 15 And the angel said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. 16 And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, 17 for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. 18 And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 18

The Fall of Babylon

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. 2 And he called out with a mighty voice,

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

She has become a dwelling place for demons,
a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

3 For all nations have drunk
the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”
4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

“Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;

5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.
6 Pay her back as she herself has paid back others,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.
7 As she glorified herself and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,
since in her heart she says,
‘I sit as a queen,
I am no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.’
8 For this reason her plagues will come in a single day,
death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. 10 They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

“Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!

For in a single hour your judgment has come.”

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

14 “The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendors
are lost to you,
never to be found again!”

15 The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

16 “Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!

17 For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”
And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far
off 18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

“What city was like the great city?”

19 And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!”

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, say-
ing,

“So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more;

22 and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more,
and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more,
and the sound of the mill
will be heard in you no more,

23 and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more,
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more,
for your merchants were the great ones of the earth,
and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.
24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth.”

Revelation 19

Rejoicing in Heaven

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

“Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
2 for his judgments are true and just;
for he has judged the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

3 Once more they cried out,

“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”
4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying,

“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;
8 it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Revelation 17-19:10.

STUDY NOTES

This is a very lengthy text whose interpretation has been widely debated through church history. Many commentaries, scholars, and pastors have spent the majority of their work on this text in trying to determine the identity of the Woman, the Beast, and the City. If you feel that some specific ideas on these symbols would be helpful to you, we hope the resources at the link in this document will provide what you need.

More generally, we can say with confidence that the Woman represents sexual immorality and the world's obsession with the physical. The Beast represents abuse of authority and the world's greed for power. The City represents material wealth and the world's obsession with acclaim and attention. These pictures were painted by the author because he wanted to point out the reasons for which God's wrath was being poured out. They are meant to represent for us the reality of mankind's rebellion against God. Even at the end of all things, God is saying "this is what your sin looks like."

Chapter 19 might seem disconnected at first, but we cannot rightly understand our first two chapters without it. We might think that the reaction to such wrath, punishment, and devastation would be weeping and grief, and for the sinner, it certainly is. However, the great multitude in heaven cries out hallelujah at seeing God tear down the images of idolatry and rebellion. These believers know how lust, greed, power, and pride have corrupted the human heart. They know how these images have destroyed mankind. So in seeing them destroyed, they rejoice and praise God. Man tried in so many ways to gain for himself, but ended up empty in the end. Followers of Jesus know that in giving away all that this world has to offer, one can actually feast for all of eternity.

As you lead your group in discussion be sure everyone recognizes this:

1) Sin has Broken Everything

While this text gives us some major categories for what sin has done to us and to our world, it also shows where sin leads. Sin breaks everything. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:13, "For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it." Sin leads to destruction. This passage shows us what our sin looks like and where it leads us.

2) Jesus Alone Can Satisfy

John intentionally juxtaposes great destruction and great celebration. How could we not celebrate at the death of death? When sin and rebellion are destroyed, God's people give Him the praise He deserves. In the marriage supper of the Lamb, Jesus is showing us that in denying the riches of this world, we have ensured we can enjoy the riches of His kingdom for all of eternity.

For more resources on this passage click the resources link [here](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How do the images in Revelation 17 and 18 highlight the reality of our sin? Where do you see some of these same sinful tendencies in your own heart? How have you participated in this rebellion?
- How does it shape our view of the end times to know that destruction and celebration are so closely tied? Does it change the way you feel about Revelation to see such celebration and feasting?
- Does this passage make you want to turn more completely to Jesus? To be able to see the end so plainly—does this help clarify anything for us?
- How can seeing where our sin leads guide us into a deeper desire to turn away from it? How can this text make sin bitter to the taste?
- What is the most encouraging thing to you about Revelation 17:1-19:10?

COMMISSION

As you wrap up your group, it is imperative that everyone knows we go into the world on mission for Jesus. Use this time to focus everyone to live on mission as you leave.

Thinking about the natural end of sin ought to make our hearts go out to those who are still trapped in it. How does this passage help you to see the stark reality of God's wrath against sin and sinners? Will you let this reality cause your heart to break for the people you know who are still under God's wrath?

Who in your life needs to know Jesus?