

A Beast without Beauty

Revelation 17:8-18

(preached Pine Grove 7/23/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bible and turn to Revelation 17:8.

I want to read our passage today...

Revelation 17:8-18...

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and [g]o to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. 9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, 10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. 11 The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. 12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one [h]purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

15 And he *said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His [i]purpose [j]by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which [k]reigns over the kings of the earth.”

John Wooden was the basketball coach for the UCLA Bruins for 27 years....

He led UCLA to 10 national championships, including 7 straight from 1967-1973...

That may not sound impressive to someone who doesn't follow college basketball but no team has ever won more than 2 in a row...

Wooden won 7 in row and 10 in 12 years, which is a feat which will never be broken or duplicated..

Yet Wooden was not your typical coach...

On the first 3 days of practice, he would take his players to the locker where they would spend hours learning how to properly put on their socks and shoes...

Wooden said that wrinkles in socks especially on the heel caused blisters and blisters meant less practice and less practice meant losing games...

So, they would practice putting on socks followed by being measured for the perfect shoe size, followed by Wooden showing them the proper way to tie their shoe and how big the knots on their shots should be...

This all may sound strange, but Wooden won and he won a lot..

When asked about his practice of putting on socks and tying shoes, Wooden would simply say...

Details win championships...

When young men arrive under my care, they want to know my secret...

My secret is...I pay attention to the little stuff....

Other coaches call wanting the details of what I do...

I tell them that I am always looking at the details of everything we do...

If you can't see the details, you don't truly know what is happening in your program...

If there is one thing that people have always wanted to know about the end of time, it is the details of how, when, and where...

Ever since, God gave the promise to return and set up his own kingdom, the whole and the church have asked?

When Lord?

How Lord?

Where Lord?

And along the questions, other questions arose..

Who will the Antichrist be?

Where will his headquarters be?

What is the mark of the beast?

Who is the false prophet?

And the often sad reality is that many in the church tried to answer these questions with precise details...

In fact, nearly every generation in church history has identified someone of their day as the Antichrist...

We have talked about the personalities that have been identified as the Antichrist...

Ronald Reagan, Henry Kissinger, Elvis Presley, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and nearly every pope have been called the Antichrist...

Yet none of those supposed “shoe-ins” for the Antichrist came to pass...

There are also questions about this future one world religion that will emerge in the final 7 years...

Some have tried to get the details on this religion...

Most have seen it as Roman Catholicism throughout history, but now there is a growing tendency to see it as a form of Islam...

Others have tried to give the details of the final world economy..

For years, bar codes were seen as the mark of the beast...

Now it is ATM cards...

And the sad reality of all of this attempt to give the details is that the church has lost the respect of the world by some of its crazy claims...

Here is the bottom line...

Stay away from supposed end times experts who claim to have all the details of the end...

Stay in the Bible and study the word and all the details you need are there and anything else needs to just be called speculation...

Now, that is not to say that the Bible doesn't give us details about some of these things...

The Bible lets us know that Antichrist is a man who has no desire for a woman, which suggests singleness or even homosexuality...

The Bible tells us that the Antichrist is most likely a Gentile of Roman descent...

The Bible tells us that he will be unknown to the world and quickly rise to prominence...

The Bible tells us that the Antichrist will be arrogant and brash but also an incredible charmer with his words..

We also know that the government of the end times will be that of a revived Roman empire, which suggests that it will have a European and Middle Eastern type empire...

So, we have details in many respects even though we may lack other details that we would like to know..

And today in the last half of Revelation 17, we will get more details about the final kingdom of evil in the world...

Again, we won't get all the details, but I think you will be surprised at the picture that is painted for us of the final 7 years of world history...

As the world's government, economies and religions combine...

Now, the question before we get more details about the evil systems of the end is this?

Why has God given us the church details of the end times?

Aren't we going to be out of the way, being snatched out of the world before the final 7 years begin?

And yes though the rapture will be our escape route, we get the details for a few reasons...

#1 - As we have talked about before, we get the details to warn others of what is coming.

#2 - We also get details because there will be people who get saved during the tribulation and they will need encouragement to persevere...

#3 - An additional reason the Lord has chosen to give us details of the end is to see trends toward the end time even in our day...

We already see the move the move to a global economy..

The move to a one world government and religion..

As you read Revelation and read the newspaper, the things that are happening in the world should be viewed through the lens of the end times...

The world is speeding to the end and events in the world are moving the world to that end..

Now again, we can't set dates and name names of people as being those times and people of the end, but we can notice trends and people of our day and see them as shadows of what is to come..

Well, the Lord is going to give us some more details about the coming evil system today in the last half of chapter 17...

We have spent two weeks looking at the false religions of the end times...

WE have talked about how they will flourish and do well and even begin to merge into one religion in the first 3 1/2 of the last 7 years of the earth's existence...

And we have talked about how the Antichrist will use these false religions of the end to further his popularity...

As we saw the picture of the false religion riding on the back of the beast in the opening section of chapter 17....

Well, this truth of the wedding of false religion to the Antichrist caused John to wonder in 17:6...

He wondered like us?

What will this look like?

Who is this beast that will use this harlot of false religion?

Where will they be located?

What will cause the world to follow the beast and the false religious system that he promotes?

And so the Lord sends an angel to John in verse 7, and he begins to help John's curiosity with some answers beginning in verse 8...

And the first detail of this relationship between the beast and false religion is found in verses 8-9...

I call this...

I. The Attraction to the Beast (8)

We live in a world that is fascinated by magic and mystery and intrigue...

People are moved by experience more than truth in our culture...

They want to be amazed and shocked and entertained more than educated about truth...

That is why the National Enquirer sells millions of copies and talk shows are incredibly popular..

The world wants to be dazzled by wild claims of truth..

Well, that mentality is of great use to Satan because he specializes in dazzling people with lies..

Remember, Satan often disguises himself as an angel of light...

In fact, all these 'supposed' near death experiences and trips to heaven often speak of a bright light...

The assumption is that it is God but I am convinced that these are actually the work of Satan disguised in light...

Satan is a dazzler, a master of intrigue able to do unexplainable to lead people astray..

Well, at the end of time...

Satan will begin the promotion of his man, the Antichrist, who will step on the world stage at the beginning of the 7 years of tribulation...

He will not come as a dangerous man with horns and a pitchfork, but he will be the devil's man nonetheless...

Now the question that most people who doubt a future Antichrist ask is this...

How can one man gain the attention of the whole world and eventually gain the worship of the whole world...

Well, for starters, he will gain attention by bringing peace to the world politically and even religiously...

Nations will begin to throw down the swords and end their wars...

And former enemies like Judaism and Islam will begin to cooperate and coexist...

And the Antichrist will take credit for that...

But the one event that pushes him to worldwide fame is his apparent death and resurrection...

We learned back in chapter 13 that the Antichrist will apparently be killed and then apparently resurrected...

I think it will be a staged death and resurrection since only God can kill and resurrect...

But regardless of whether it is a real death and resurrection, it won't matter because the world will buy it...

That is what you see in verse 8...

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and [g]o to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

The beast, or the Antichrist, is described as one who was, and is not, and is about to come...

In other words, he will live, and die, and come again, and according to verse 8, this fake resurrection will cause the world to wonder at the beast...

In other words, the world will adore him because of his apparent death and resurrection...

Can you imagine the following that a man would get if he dies before the eyes of the whole world and then comes back to life?

You say, “well, it didn’t go good for Jesus.”

But imagine if a world leader is killed today on live television and then comes back to life?

It will unread in that day...

And that apparent resurrection will seal the deal for the popularity and worship of the Antichrist...

Now, this supposed death and resurrection will occur at the midpoint of the tribulation....

It will occur at the height of world peace and at the height of religious prosperity...

Now that worldwide fame of the Antichrist will be important for one very important reason that we will see in a minute...

Just tuck that rise to popularity away in your brain a minute and let’s move from the attraction to the beast to a better explanation of the beast in verses 9-13...

II. The Explanation of the Beast (9-13)

Now remember, John has just witnessed this rise of false religions as they ride on the back of the Antichrist and gain popularity in the world...

Now that beast, better known as the Antichrist, was described for us in verse 3 as having 7 heads and 10 horns...

John obviously wondered what those heads and horns meant, so the angel gives an explanation...

Verse 9...

9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,

So, the first part of verse 9 gives us a detail of the beast and the woman...

The seven heads represent 7 mountains on which the harlot of false religion sits...

I won't take you through all the reasons why this is the case, but the city of Rome has always been known as the city of 7 hills...

You can check on your computers this afternoon, but Rome was a city of 7 hills...

So the seven heads of the beast have a connection to Rome...

Now, quick review for us real quick...

I am going to put a picture of a statue on the screen...

This is a picture that I have used before as we looked at the book of Daniel...

If you remember the book of Daniel, in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon has a dream, and in his dream, he sees a large statue made of various materials...

No one can tell him what his dream means, so he is about to wipe out all his wise men until a young Jewish man named Daniel asks God to reveal the meaning of the dream to him so he could tell it Nebuchadnezzar...

God answers Daniel's prayer by revealing to Daniel the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and long story short, the drama was about all the world empires that would rule over Israel from the time of Daniel forward...

And the dream was a picture of those kingdoms...

Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon was the head of gold, the Persian empire was the chest and arms of silver, the Greek empire was the belly and thighs of bronze...

And then the legs of iron was the Roman empire that ruled in the days of Jesus and was even ruling as John wrote the book of Revelation...

But that was not the last kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there would be a final kingdom that were the feet and toes of the statue...

And the idea is that the Rome of Jesus and John's day would go away for a while but it would return to power at the end of time...

And the picture here in Revelation 19 is that the beast is connected to a city of seven hills...

In other words, the Antichrist will rise to rule a revived Revived Roman Empire...

Now the harlot will have a connection to Rome as well...

All false religions will not come out of Rome, but certainly the Roman Catholic church will be a major false religion of the tribulation period among many others...

So, we know that the Antichrist will be the leader of this new Roman Empire...

Now, you may ask, what is the Roman Empire?

Well, at its height, the Roman Empire was essentially all of Europe and much of the Middle East...

And that seems to be the empire that will emerge in the final 7 years of the world..

If you look now, Europe is continuing to merge...

Traveling Europe used to be more difficult because of closed borders, but now there is ease of travel there as borders have opened...

You once had to have 20 different forms of money if you traveling over Europe, but now you just need a Euro...

Communications and cooperation between European countries is better than ever...

All of this is seen as progress in our day, but in the grand scheme of the world, this uniting of Europe is paving the road for a revived Roman Empire...

Then we get more information about the beast in verse 10..

The seven heads are not just a reference to the Roman makeup of the Antichrist's empire, they also represent seven kings...

Look back at verse 10..

10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

Now what is this a reference to?

Well, let's go back to our statue for a minute...

This statue represents the world powers that will rule over Israel from the time of Daniel forward...

Now, if you look at it, you will say that there were 5 major kings and kingdoms that have ruled or will rule Israel...

Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and a Revived Rome..

And you will say, where are the other two kings?

Remember, Daniel wrote from his day forward...

And in his day, the Babylonians were ruling...

Yet, Israel had also been ruled by the Egyptians in the days of Moses and by the Assyrians in the days after David and Solomon...

I have this statue with some number on it just as this verse makes sense to you...

The seven kings are right here...

Five were fallen in John's day...

The Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Greeks were gone...

John then says, one is...

Which means that the Romans were dominating The Jews in his present day of 90 AD..

And then that one is to come, which is the 7th kingdom of feet and toes which will be the revived Roman Empire...

And John notes that that final kingdom must remain a little while, which would suggest a short amount of time...

Then we read this in verse 11, which seems confusing, but I will explain ...

11 The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

The Antichrist will be the 7th king of this revived Roman Empire...

We have already seen that and talked about it....

But John says he is the 7th and also the 8th...

Now, what in the word does the mean?!

Well, as the Antichrist rises to power, he will lead a revived Roman Empire...

Certainly, he will have Satan influencing him in his rise to power...

But once he is killed and resurrected, the Roman Empire will no longer be needed to help him gain popularity...

He will also no longer need false religion to help him rise to the top...

At that point after his supposed death and resurrection, he will no longer be the head of a empire and the uniter of false religions...

He will become the empire and all false religions will make him their object of worship...

You see, he will be the 7th king to rule over Israel at the start of tribulation...

But once he has gained worldwide power, he will also be the 8th and final and most gruesome ruler over Israel as well...

And it seems that this man who is under Satanic influence for the first 3 1/2 years of his rise to power will be actually filled with Satan for the final 3 1/2 years...

As he dies, he is resurrected with full demonic power and influence....

As Christ is God in the flesh, the Antichrist will be Satan in the flesh...

Though he will be the 7th king to rule Israel, the 8th king will also be him but hundreds of times worse...

Then we get another detail of the beast in verses 12-13...

Now that John has told us what the 7 heads the beast represent, we find out what the 10 horns represent....

Verse 12...

12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one [h]purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

The 10 horns are simply kings under the Antichrist in the first 3 1/2 years who help him rise to power....

Most feel that these will be 10 European kings that throw their support behind him when he comes on the world scene and makes peace in the Middle East...

I tend to see these 10 kings as both European and Middle Eastern kings that unite under the Antichrist...

And you see the reason they come together under his rule in verse 13...

They unite to give him all their power...

In my mind's eye, I see a world troubled after the rapture but settled down but this charismatic peace making man in the months after the rapture....

His words will woo the people of the world and even untie the governments of the world under his power and 10 world leaders will join together and throw their support under him and their power to him in those first 3 1/2 years...

So, those are a few more details of explanation about the beast, now quickly, let's finish up the rest of the chapter...

We have seen the alleged death and resurrection as the attraction to the beast...

And we have seen a more detailed explanation of the beast, now let's see....

III. The Desolation by the Beast (14-18)

The Antichrist has one singular focus while on earth...

Verse 14...

14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

15 And he *said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His [i]purpose [j]by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which [k]reigns over the kings of the earth."

His focus is war against God...

The first victim of his violence will be the harlot of false religion....

Though the Antichrist will use false religion to gain power, in verse 16, he and the 10 kings will destroy the false religions of the world...

And demand that all religions worship him...

The Antichrist who will gain popularity for 3 1/2 by saying...

“Worship whatever you desire...”

Will eventually say, “I am god. You must worship me.”

And then he will gather all this support from the people of the world for one specific purpose...

He will wage a final war against God...

Satan, who fell because he wanted to be God will fight to the very end to rid the universe of God...

Verse 14 says that in the second half of the tribulation after he has gathered worldwide support and loyalty, he will now set his sights on being a worldwide object of worship..

Though we will see this war in more detail in chapter 19, we see the outcome of that attempt right here...

The Lamb will overcome him...

You see, the Antichrist who will be filled with Satan at the end of time will sow what he has reaped for so long...

The man of destruction will be destroyed forevermore....

This is the fate of all who try to fight against God...

They are defeated forevermore...

And the great encouragement to us in all this preview of coming evil is this...

God will be in control of it all...

As the world spins out of control and evil rises like never before, God will never leave his seat...

You see here right here in verse 17...

God put all these things in their hearts to serve his purposes...

The Antichrist will do no more than God allows in those 7 years...

The same is true for the false prophet and for Satan...

You see, the tribulation period may look like God is off his throne and chaos is everywhere, yet we know that

God is always fully in control and directing the affairs of the world...

And it will be no different at the end of the world than it is today...

Conclusion

Couple closing thoughts for you to consider today...

#1 - The world is captivated by sights and sounds, the church is captivated by truth.

It is not hard to imagine a world being led astray by a fake death and resurrection...

Millions today believe all sorts of illusions and rumors today that are not even close to the truth...

When a world leader dies and then comes to life while the world looks on, they will blindly follow him right off a cliff...

Smoke and mirrors captivate people...

But you know what captivates true believers?

The truth....

Our hearts don't follow fables and legends, we follow Christ who is the source of all truth...

#2 - The world will fall for a man who creates world peace, the church follows a man who gives us peace with God.

When your ultimate goal is a better planet, you will do just about anything to get it...

Including showing allegiance to the Antichrist.

But when your goal is a better life to come, you need to turn from your sins in repentance and put your faith in Jesus Christ...

If this planet is all that matters, you will end up perishing with it...

If the life to come is what matters, you will get your eyes off this world and make sure you are ready for the world to come...

Let us pray...