

THAT MIGHTY CITY, BURNING

Part I

Subject and Proper Divisions in Rev. 17:1-20:6

By Arlen L. Chirwood

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities...

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come...

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down and shall be found no more at all (Rev. 18:1, 2a, 3, 5, 7-10, 21).

The main thrust of Scripture seen throughout Revelation chapter seventeen into the first part of chapter twenty has to do with God's plans and purposes regarding *the Jewish people, the Gentile nations, and the Church of God* being brought to fruition, leading into the Messianic Era (cf. I Cor. 10:32).

Jew, Gentile, Church of God

In a larger sense, the working out of God's plans and purposes for all three creations — *Jew, Gentile, and Christian* — has to do with *ruined man* and involves 6,000 years of restorative work, followed by the 1,000-year Messianic Era, *a Sabbath rest* awaiting the people of God. And this is patterned after God's previous restorative work surrounding *the ruined material creation* — occurring over six days time, with God resting on the seventh day (a Sabbath rest) — in Genesis chapters one and two (Heb. 4:4, 9; cf. Ex. 31:13-17; II Peter 1:15-18; 3:3-8).

In a narrower sense, regarding Israel and the nations, the working out of God's plans and purposes in this respect dates back 4,000 years (to the days of Abraham, about 2,000 B.C.) and 2,600 years (to the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles, about 605 B.C.).

And *in a narrower sense yet, regarding Christians*, the working out of God's plans and purposes in this respect dates back 2,000 years to the inception of the Church on the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D.

The complete scope of God's plans and purposes is dealt with numerous places throughout Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets — "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:9, 10), with different facets of the matter being dealt with different ways in different places. Each facet provides a different part of *one complete overall word picture*, with the complete picture presenting the matter *exactly as God would have man view the whole of His plans and purposes regarding Israel, the nations, and the Church*.

And, regardless of how or where these things are dealt with in the Old Testament, there is always *a particular emphasis on concluding events* — events which bring the whole of the matter to fruition, as

seen beginning in Revelation chapter seventeen and continuing through the first part of chapter twenty.

Thus, when one arrives at this closing part of the Book of Revelation and begins reading extensively about *a Beast and a harlot woman*, he is not left to his own imagination and interpretation concerning that which is in view. Scripture will reveal and interpret the matter for him.

All one has to do is go back to the Old Testament and see how God has previously laid the whole of the matter out, beginning in Genesis.

In this respect, through *comparing that which is spiritual with that which is spiritual* (I Cor. 2:9-13) — in this case, comparing numerous sections of the Old Testament with that seen beginning in Revelation chapter seventeen — *the Old Testament will interpret the matter for the reader*.

The Old Testament has already dealt extensively, in minute detail, with *the whole* of that seen beginning with Revelation chapter seventeen and continuing into the first part of chapter twenty. *A complete word picture* has already been presented, for all to see. And this part of the Book of Revelation, dealing with the same thing as previously seen in the Old Testament, places the emphasis exactly where Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets had previously placed the emphasis, which could only be expected.

Emphasis and Divisions in Revelation 17:1-20:6

The emphasis beginning in chapter seventeen and continuing through chapter nineteen, preceding the Messianic Era in chapter twenty, is placed on *Israel and the nations* (17:1-19:6, 11-21). And, within this section, *the Church of God*, as well, is brought back into the picture from the opening chapters of the book, though only taking up four verses throughout chapters seventeen through nineteen (19:7-10).

Beginning with chapter seventeen and continuing through the opening six verses of chapter twenty, this section of Scripture could be divided into four parts:

1) *In Rev. 17:1-19:6*, though both *the Beast and the harlot* occupy center-stage, *the harlot*

alone, residing in the kingdom of the Beast, is the one centrally being dealt with throughout.

The subject matter of this section of Scripture is stated, in so many words, in the opening verse:

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; and I will shew unto thee *the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.*”

The harlot is dealt with at length pertaining to *her identity* and *where she resides* (leaving no possible room for anyone to question that being pictured [if Scripture is compared with Scripture]).

And then *the harlot*, within the scope of this section of Scripture, is seen being *completely destroyed* (again, leaving no possible room for anyone to question that being pictured [again, if Scripture is compared with Scripture]).

The *Beast and his kingdom*, on the other hand, are dealt with in this section of Scripture only with respect to *identity and an impending destruction*. The harlot is the one dealt with *in detail throughout*, not the Beast.

2) In Rev. 19:7-10, after dealing with various things concerning the harlot and her relationship to the nations, followed by the harlot's destruction, attention is called to *the bride and the marriage supper of the Lamb*, occurring in heaven, prior to Christ's return to the earth.

This is the first mention of anything having to do with the bride since chapters one through three of the book, anticipating the relinquishment of crowns (ch. 4) and the redemption of the inheritance (chs. 5ff) — with the redemption of the inheritance being completed following Christ's return (ch. 19b), allowing the bride to then become the Lamb's wife (cf. Ruth 4:1ff).

3) In Rev. 19:11-21, the heavens are opened, and Christ is seen returning back to the earth “with his mighty angels” — *i.e., the armies of heaven* — accompanying and following Him at this time (cf. II Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:14).

Accompanying Christ, as well, will be Moses and Elijah (cf. Matt. 16:28-17:5; Luke 9:27-32), who will evidently be instrumental in His dealings with both Israel on the one hand and the Beast and his kingdom on the other.

(For details on Moses and Elijah accompanying Christ at this time, refer to the author's book, COMING IN HIS KINGDOM, particularly Chapters III, IV.)

The bride, from verses seven through ten, is not seen among those accompanying Christ back to the earth at this time. In fact, Scripture is quite clear that the bride *will not* accompany Christ back to the earth when He returns.

Christ will be returning to complete His dealings with Israel and the nations, and the bride will have no more to do with this than she will have previously had with Christ's dealings with Israel and the nations during the Tribulation. The Bride simply will not participate in judgments occurring on earth when the seals of the seven-sealed scroll are being broken, and these judgments will not be concluded until after Christ returns to the earth to complete His dealings with Israel and the nations preceding the Messianic Era.

Note that Joseph's wife, Asenath, was in another part of the palace when he dealt with his brethren at the time he revealed himself to them.

And note that Moses' wife, Zipporah, only went part way with him when he returned to Egypt to deal with his brethren in this same respect.

Moses and Zipporah were reunited only after he had dealt with the Jewish people in Egypt, after he had dealt with the Pharaoh of Egypt, after the death of the firstborn, after he had led the Israelites out of Egypt, and after Pharaoh and his armed forces had been destroyed in the Sea.

And the same sequence will, of necessity, be followed in the antitype. The bride, as Zipporah, may very well accompany Christ

part way and remain in the New Jerusalem above the earth while He deals with Israel and the nations on earth. Then, once these dealings have been concluded — which will be after Israel's national conversion and restoration to her land, and after the destruction of Gentile world power (which, according to Scripture, will occur in this order) — Christ will be reunited with the one who will then have become His wife.

(At the time of the destruction of Gentile world power, all the judgments seen within the breaking of the seals of the seven-sealed scroll in Revelation chapter five will have come to pass.

This will complete God's terms for the redemption of the inheritance — with the marriage of Christ to His bride and the re-marriage of God to Israel seen as part and parcel with the redemption of the inheritance [cf. Ruth 4:1ff].)

The preceding succinctly covers, in a somewhat general respect, the sequence of events which will occur when Christ returns to the earth, as seen in Rev. 19:11-21. *Very few* of these events are seen and dealt with in this brief section in the Book of Revelation, but *all* are seen and dealt with in prior Scripture, beginning in Genesis.

Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to put the complete word picture together, *exactly as God has outlined and provided this information in His Word* (I Cor. 2:9-13).

4) In Rev. 20:1-6, all is brought to completion and fruition. Satan is bound, cast into the abyss, individuals are assigned positions of power and authority in Christ's kingdom, and the millennial reign — that toward which everything in Scripture moves — will then occur.

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