

**A Study of the Book of Revelation**  
Source Material: *Come, Lord Jesus* by Mark Braaten  
Week 12: December 6, 2009

## **Read Revelation 17:1-6**

“John is again drawing on Old Testament tradition. In the Old Testament, prophets sometimes refer to cities as being prostitutes. (For example, in Ezekiel 27:3 Tyre is called a prostitute.) Also in the Old Testament, the city of Babylon was described as ‘seated on many waters’ (Jer 51:13). . . . Now John uses the phrase to point to Rome, with the ‘many waters’ serving as a reference to her trading empire. Rome is described as a drunken prostitute.” (Braaten, pg. 121)

“What John is doing here is writing political satire. Rome was often described in terms of Roma, the mother goddess. She was the great city from which the rest of the world would orientate itself. Now John says, ‘Don’t believe that.’ Rome isn’t a mother or a goddess. She is a whore, a drunken whore. What John is doing is ‘unmasking’ Rome for his readers. . . . John portrays Rome so negatively that the Christians will instinctively recoil from Rome and her ways.” (Braaten, pg. 122)

*When we are given a glimpse of what is below the surface, does that necessarily change how we view and individual or an organization?*

## **Read Revelation 17:7-18**

John is “drawing from the legend of Nero and particularly the rumors of Nero’s return. In the Nero legend Nero ‘was’ because he did live, now he ‘is not’ because he was dead, but he is ‘about to ascend’ because he was rumored to be returning. In the second place John here once again reminds us that evil parodies God – God is the one who ‘is and who was and who is to come’ while the beast ‘was, and is not and is about to ascend.’ Evil tries to make itself look good. Third, John makes comment here about Roman persecution. The beast ‘was,’ meaning in the past the Roman Empire persecuted Christians. Now it ‘is not’ as the persecutions were not happening. But ‘it will ascend’ as John foresees persecutions coming again from the Christians.” (Braaten, pg. 123)

*Can you give an example of evil disguising itself as good?*

*Note:* Rome was known as the city on seven hills. The references to seven mountains, etc. are a clear attempt to connect Rome to the beast.

*Braaten offers the following comments on this section and its challenging imagery.*

“We do well not to take this imagery literally. For example, do kings really rule for only one hour? Rather than pushing the imagery too literally, we do better to ask what the imagery is point to, which is clear. The Roman Empire and its allies will fight against the Lamb. They will not succeed. But then the Empire and its allies will turn on the whore, on Rome itself. Rom’s very allies and empire will destroy her! What John is saying is that evil ultimately self-destructs. . . .

Rom will fall, for by its very nature evil must fail. God alone creates, and that which is opposed to God will be destructive, and will finally destroy even itself. That which is opposed to God cannot triumph and ultimately cannot survive. What an incredible message of hope, both for first century Christians and for twenty-first century Christians! No matter how bleak our world, God will triumph. We can live with the assurance of that.” (Braaten, pg. 124)

## **Read Revelation 18:1-8**

Note: Changes tenses in verse 2 and 4 remind us that this is not trying to make future predictions of exact time

Braaten draws on the work of another scholar named Adela Yarbro Collins to discuss why Rome is being judged. According to Braaten, Collins suggests that Rome is judged for:

1. Blasphemous worship of false gods
2. Violent behavior toward others
3. Its continuous self-glorification
4. Over emphasis on wealth

“A good question for modern day Christians to ask here is, are we guilty of any of these things? As we live in a culture that lifts up wealth, focuses on violence, and too often exhibits self-glorification and arrogance, we need to dare to ask how the book of Revelation would reshape our lives. We do well to ask how John’s critique of ancient Rome speaks to our nation, to our lives and to our modern day. We too must learn, again and again, to direct our lives to God and God alone.” (Braaten, pg. 126)

*How would you respond to the assessment that many people have made that America is the new Rome?*

In Revelation 18:9-24, John lists those who will mourn Rome’s destruction because it will mean that they will lose their wealth and power, but he also acknowledges in verse 22 that there is also good in Roman culture that will also be lost.

## **Read Revelation 19:6-10**

“The announcement is of a marriage with Jesus the Lamb as groom and the people of God as bride. This image of God being the groom and the people of God being the bride is drawn from the Old Testament (for example, Isa 62:5, Jer 22, Hos 2:19-20). . . . The image of marriage serves to announce the final victory of God. Jesus and his people are now to be united in ultimate glory and salvation.” (pg. 129) Even though the marriage is announced, it will not happen until Chapter 21, because as usual, John introduces something and then jumps to something else.

Verse 10 makes an important point, “that we are to worship God and only God. Even other good thing (such as angels!) cannot take God’s place as the object of worship.” (Braaten, pg. 130)

*Do you see examples of people worshipping something other than God in today’s world?*