All Creation Joins in Giving Praise to God and the Lamb

* A study of Revelation with focus on Earthcare—Week 5

As people are gathering, ask for 7 volunteers who would read portions of chapter 19. Provide each reader with a copy.

Today we will work our way through Revelation 17, 18 and 19.

We begin by meeting the harlot. “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk. So 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. The woman was clothed 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 fornication; and on her forehead was written the name, a mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth’s abominations.” And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. This is a word that communicates to us by satire. It is humorous and serious. Rather than noble she is degrading.

The common response to this is to try to decode it. What is this about? A common response is that the harlot is the apostate church, one religion, representing nothing. The seven heads are Rome. The ten kings are ten countries in Europe (these are some of the ideas in Left Behind). But if we continue to read it as a letter, as we have, not futuristically, but as to what this says, maybe it has a theological message.

What if the harlot embodies the traits of a reality that transcends a point in time? It is a composite image of seductive powers, wealth, false worship, and delight in violence against the vulnerable.

Think of the seductive powers of our culture. We are encouraged to buy, buy, buy. We don’t consider the trash we are accumulating or the resources we are wasting.

What is interesting is that as we work through there chapters, we see that the harlot is destroyed by the beast. This is the turning point in Revelation. Evil destroys itself.

So we enter into chapter 18, the vision of Babylon’s funeral.
As we listen to our readers, we will ask ourselves, Who is the harlot? How does the harlot play a role in how we care for our earth? Play sinister music in the background.

Readers: 7 people (two kings and two merchants)

Reader 1: Rev. 18:1-3 (angel)

Reader 2: Rev. 18:4-8 (heavenly voice)

Reader 3: Rev. 18:9-10 (Kings of the earth)

Reader 4: Rev. 18:11-17a (Merchants)

Reader 5: Rev. 18:17b-20 (Shipmaster)

Reader 6: Rev. 18: 21-24 (angel)

After the reading, have the large group break into smaller groups again and discuss what they heard. Do you hear the question, who do you belong to? Who is the harlot and how does the harlot play into our care of the earth (referring back to the list on the white board)? (We see the harlot wants to be God, but is not God. The harlot is against God, full of deceit, violence, waste, and luxury. The harlot sees people are nothing but commodities, objects for sale. Our passion for things, our excessive consumerism and waste make the world we experience the harlot).

Leader: Summarize the discussion.

Leader: As we finish our time of looking at the Harlot, lets take a minute to look at the comparison of the Bride and the Harlot. (Provide the following on an overhead).

Babylon (17:1-8)  Jerusalem (19:7-8)

Clothed in scarlet  Clothed in linen

Full of impurity  Bright and pure

Drunk on the blood of the saints  Clothed in righteous deeds of the saints