

Revelation 17

THE DOOM OF “BABYLON THE GREAT”: MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

In this chapter we are introduced to ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great’, referred to also as the ‘Great Harlot’ and the ‘Mother of Harlots’. ‘Her’ historical legacy is reviewed and her demise from the earthly scene is described. This corrupt and evil world religious system will ultimately be judged and destroyed. Also in view in this chapter are the primary villains who instigate war [i.e., at the Battle of Armageddon] against the Lamb of God, the LORD of lords and King of kings. Namely these are the anti-Christ [Beast with 10 Horns and 7 Heads] and his seven national leaders who were enticed in doing this by the three frog-like demonic spirits coming from the mouths of the Dragon, the anti-Christ and the False Prophet {**Rev. 16:13-14**}.

REV. 17:1-2, 15 ➤ THE INTRODUCTION OF THE “GREAT PROSTITUTE”

[1 *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" 15 Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."*]

In **verses 1 and 2** John is prepared (by one of the angels who had the seven bowls of God’s wrath) to see the judgment or punishment¹ of the “*great prostitute*” or “*harlot*”. She is sitting on “*many waters*” and the leaders (kings) of the earth have committed *spiritual adultery* with her and the people of the earth are seduced and *intoxicated by her pleasures*. We will come to see that *Spiritual adultery is equivalent to idolatry* and contains elements of *covetousness* and *greed*. (**Colossians 3:5**). In these verses the scene to be presented to John is introduced.

NOTES: This ‘GREAT PROSTITUTE’ appears to be associated with a world-wide false religion.

- In **Revelation 18:3-7** the harlot’s allure is described. There it is said that the merchants of the earth grew rich from her *excessive luxuries*. The Greek word here means ‘*arrogant luxury*’. In verse 7 it is testified of the harlot that she gave herself *glory* and *luxury*. (Remember from **Isaiah 13** that the wrath of God is coming to destroy the *arrogant* and the *proud*).
- In **Revelation 18:11-13** the harlot’s merchandise is described – it includes the souls of men!
- In **Revelation 17:3** the woman, this harlot, is covered with blasphemous names.
- In **Revelation 17:6** the harlot is described as being drunk with the blood of the saints, those who bore testimony of Jesus.

¹ **judgment** [2917 *krima* (kree'-mah)] a judicial decision (against "crime"): i.e., a judgment executed. (We get our English word ‘crime’ from this word). A decree, decision, judgment or sentence against a crime, the punishment with which one is sentenced

APPLICATION:

Perhaps no one personifies the lifestyle of this idolatrous material pleasure more than Hugh Hefner, publisher of Playboy magazine. He has stated over and over again that the goal of life is to indulge in all the physical pleasure it has to offer and do it without guilt. This lifestyle is the "religion" of Hedonism². Such individuals do not realize they are giving up freedom for slavery and forfeiting salvation for condemnation. Peter warns the Church of false teachers bringing in 'destructive heresies' and delivers a scathing indictment of those who follow such corrupt ways in **2 Pet. 2:1-22**. An excerpt appears below:

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.—**2 Pet 2:18-19**

God designed the act of sexual intimacy to be the pinnacle of all physical human relationships that two people can experience. And the reason for this is given in **Genesis 2:24** where the physical union of man and woman is described as them becoming '... one flesh'. There is something deeply spiritual as well as physical involved in this most intimate of all earthly relationships³. Through adultery and fornication the most intimate and most special relationship that God designed in the human realm is perverted and sold to the highest bidder. A harlot has something she could use legitimately, but she refuses to do so.

..... Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
— **1 Corinthians 6:13-20**.

Note that the woman is referred to as a great 'prostitute' or 'harlot'⁴. This is significant in what the term implies. *It refers to one who hires herself (or himself) out with no concern or understanding of the value God puts on what she (he) is selling.* This is a "selling out" of God's sexual gift.

² Hedonism is the philosophy that the pursuit of 'pleasure' is of ultimate importance in deriving happiness and satisfaction. Although God desires us to be satisfied and find delight in our lives {e.g., **Ps. 37:4, 11; SoS 2:3; Jer. 31:14**}, hedonism seeks to find these things irrespective of the fact that this pleasure and happiness can and most often comes from abusing the relationships that God has designed for our enjoyment and well-being. Hedonism promotes engaging in practices that the Word of God condemns as immoral. The word is derived from the Greek word for 'delight' [*hedonismos*] and 'pleasure' [*hedone*].

³ This is why God is so careful in defining sexual sins and why there are so serious. They mar the very essence of what God created to be the most intimate and communicative relationship between the apex of His creation, man and woman. Note what Paul says about this in **1 Corinthians 6:13-20**.

⁴ **harlot** [4204 *porne* (por'-nay)] a female prostitute: A woman who sells her body for sexual uses; a prostitute, a harlot, one who yields herself to defilement for the sake of gain ; any woman indulging in unlawful sexual intercourse, whether for gain or for lust. Metaphorically, an idolator.

But here the term for 'harlot' is used metaphorically of *spiritual adultery*. What is that? Simply stated it is *unfaithfulness against God and worshipping that which is against the nature and will of God* – it is **100%, undiluted IDOLATRY**. It is manifested in the pursuit and enjoyment of physical pleasure to the exclusion of God. It describes the practice of those “.....who do not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness.” {**2. Thess. 2:12**}

Of the seven churches Jesus addresses, three in particular; PERGAMUM {**Rev. 2:14-16**}, THYATIRA {**Rev. 2:20-25**} and LAODICEA {**Rev. 3:15-18**}; personify the characteristics of this 'GREAT HARLOT'. These characteristics include (1) introducing subtle heresies and rationalizing sinful behavior; (2) tolerance of false teaching and spiritual deception leading to acceptance of sexual immorality and partaking in false worship practices (e.g., reverence and prayers offered to saints); (3) lack of spiritual discernment and maturity; (4) compromising foundational Christian doctrines and embracing worldly philosophy; (5) diluting the Word of God and promoting an immoral lifestyle; (6) glorifying materialism and luxurious extravagance; (7) arrogance and self-gratification; (8) spiritual blindness; (9) self-deceived and devoted to religious ritual devoid of true spiritual life.

Jesus said that one cannot serve both *materialism* and God at the same time. A person will love one and hate the other. The idea here is the *idolatry* of covetousness and greed.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”. – **Matthew 6:24.**

John tells us

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – **1 John 2:15.**

John goes on to say that the desires of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life are all passing away. The apostle Paul puts it this way; note several themes which are in the context of **Rev.17:1-2:**

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.... – **Colossians 3:1-6**

However, there is another aspect of *spiritual prostitution* here. It is having a **form of godliness but denying the power of God**. That is perhaps what this 'HARLOT' really represents. And it is in that sense that she represents all that is false religion and worship.

Note very carefully what Paul tells us—it is the reason that the 'HARLOT' prospers:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
– **2 Timothy 3:1-5.**

No wonder the world will come to worship the beast wholesale – he’s their kind of man!

In contrast with all this Paul tells followers of Jesus Christ:

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

– **1 Timothy 6:6-12.**

And **Revelation 18:4** exhorts people to come out of a relationship with the great prostitute so that they will not share in her judgment.

For believers, Paul exhorts and warns us to live Godly and holy lives:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. – **Colossians 3:1-7.***

And because the harlot (pagan religious system) is shown “..... sitting on many waters” her pagan influence is shown to be on a worldwide scale. Why? Because these waters are interpreted for us in **verse 15** as the sea of humanity. They are

Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples⁵, multitudes⁶, nations⁷, and tongues⁸."

I believe the waters the GREAT PROSTITUTE is sitting on correspond to the sea (of humanity) out of which the 1st BEAST having 7 heads and 10 horns comes from (**Revelation 13:1**). This is the one identified as the “*little horn*” in **Daniel 8:9-11** and the 8th king described in **Revelation 17:11**. He is elsewhere called “*the lawless one*” and “*the man of sin*”.

Water represents the beginning of God’s creative acts. In **Genesis 1:2** we read:

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

⁵ **peoples** [2992 *laos* (lah-os')] a primary word; people in general.

⁶ **multitudes** [3793 *ochlos* (okh'los)] a crowd, horde or multitude of people; a class of people.

⁷ **nations** [1484 *ethnos* (eth'-nos)] a tribe or group of people living together, with common culture.

⁸ **tongues** [1100 *glossa* (gloce-sah')] the tongue; by implication, a language.

And Peter tells us that the whole creation belongs to God and the earth was formed out of water.

*Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with {their} mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For {ever} since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God {the} heavens existed long ago and {the} earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. – **2 Peter 3:3-6**.*

Now, this GREAT PROSTITUTE is sitting on many waters (God’s creation) as if she owns it.

There is also a more significant aspect of *water* for water symbolizes both *physical* and *spiritual* life. On a recent trip through the Owens Valley in California, farmers had put up signs visible from the freeway. These signs read: “FOOD GROWS WHERE WATER FLOWS”. Jesus said that whosoever believes in Him would have rivers of living water flowing from his/her heart. This living water refers to the Spirit of God who imparts eternal life.

*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. – **John 7:37-39**.*

We have concluded that the harlot represents a pagan religious system that is in opposition and competition with the worship of the True God, Jehovah – Christ Jesus. ***Just as a prostitute represents a perverted physical relationship, so the Great Prostitute represents a perverted spiritual relationship = false religion.*** The influence of this pagan religious system covers all of humanity. It will be destroyed by the “man of sin” and his confederacy of 10 kings (**Revelation 17:16,17**) and replaced with the *religion of the beast*.

But the ‘HARLOT’ [apostate religious system] has an enemy as we will see. The ‘BEAST’ with the 7 heads and 10 horns [anti-Christ’s Kingdom] hates her and is plotting her destruction!

REV. 17:3-6 ➤ THE DESCRIPTION & IDENTITY OF THE “GREAT PROSTITUTE”

[3 *So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.]*

In **Rev. 4:1-2** John was carried in the Spirit up into Heaven where he found himself standing before the throne of God. Now John is ‘carried away in the Spirit’ to a *wilderness* to see the next great sign. Now this could be referring figuratively to the spiritual condition prevailing on the earth during this time. But it could also be referring to the literal wilderness somewhere on earth perhaps to a place outside of Rome called the ‘Campagna Region’.

There, in this wilderness, John saw something that made him wonder greatly because it was so unexpected – so unusual. In a word, it was weird. It’s like “one of these things doesn’t belong here’.

He sees what appears to be an elegant and beautiful woman riding on the back of a fearsome, red-colored beast having 10 horns and 7 heads full of anti-God slogans (*names of blasphemy*). These could be statements against God’s holiness, sovereignty and power. Or they may be banners or badges the beast is wearing that indicate he believes he should be worshipped as God. Either way, these ‘names’ devalue His character and power and designed to question or contradict the integrity, wisdom, glory and honor of God. This beast is reminiscent of the one described in chapter 13 [refer to Fig. 12-1] but described here with a different kind of body.

This woman is outwardly beautiful and full of life but inwardly she is full of deceit and devoid of true spiritual life. She is attired in a most elegant fashion; she is wearing purple and scarlet clothing indicating wealth and status⁹. Purple was the color of Roman imperialism while red or scarlet was the predominant color of religious Rome and is still the primary color associated with cardinals of the Roman Catholicism. It is also the color of blood by the way.

In addition to her fancy clothing, she is decked out in all manner of jewelry made from precious metals and stones. She is wearing gold ornaments adorned with sapphires, rubies and diamonds. And if that were not enough she is also dripping with pearl necklaces.

But she also has “.....*in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication*”. This is referring to the spiritual adultery she has enticed the world to engage in. It is also an indication of her true nature and purpose. Here her ‘true colors’ and ‘real jewelry’ are evident and verse 2 already has told us that “.....*the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication*”.

This ‘great harlot’ embodies all that is pagan and spiritually corrupt. She represents the intoxicating effect that false religion has because it exploits the spiritual need for man to worship and also satisfies his inherent nature to rebel against God. Here is what Jesus said of this kind of religion:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee; first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” – Matt. 23:25-28

Where did this woman come from, what is her origin? Although the excellent Apocalypse expositor, S.A. Seiss, makes a compelling Biblical argument that the location of this ‘BABYLON THE GREAT’ will be the literal, rebuilt site of the ancient city, we have already looked at clear scriptural evidence why this is probably not the case {refer to notes on ‘Babylon’ at **Rev. 14:8** and **16:19**}. Babylon is still in ruins and desolate and it is prophesied never to be rebuilt.

⁹ Purple cloth was made by a rare and expensive dye which usually only the wealthy and royalty could afford. It was social taboo for a commoner to wear these bright and fancy colors.

This ‘mystery’ woman is identified for us in verses 9 and 18 where we are told that the ‘seven heads are seven mountains (or hills) on which the woman sits’ and is also the “great city that rules over the kings of the earth”. The great city in John’s day that ruled over the nations was not Babylon, it was Rome. In J. Vernon McGee’s notes on this passage he quotes two secular and one Christian writer regarding the reference to seven mountains:

Horace [65—8 BC] wrote, “The gods, who look with favor on the seven hills.....”

Ovid [43 BC—17 AD] wrote, “But Rome looks around on the whole globe from her seven mountains, the seat of the empire and abode of the gods.”

Augustine [354—430 AD] wrote, “Babylon is a former Rome and Rome is a later Babylon”.

This woman is the ‘great’ because she comes to full power as the pseudo-Christian church and false religious system after all the true believers in Jesus Christ have been taken out of the world {refer to Revelation chapter 4 notes on the ‘Rapture’}. After all, the church buildings will be left standing and the great apostasy will have produced a large number of people attending those places that sadly will not even realize anyone is missing from their ranks.

This ecclesiastical ‘Babylon’ will thus have had a great head-start over the 10-horned Beast and the setting up of his kingdom. The 10 horns on the Beast the woman is riding represent ten kings who actually ‘hate’ her {see **verse 16**} and will eventually destroy her.

The woman, who is the great harlot, has a name inscribed on her forehead; ‘MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT’. This is because of her connection to the original city of Babylon not with the Babylon of Daniel’s day. What is it that happened there? **Genesis 11:1-9** gives us the answer. Mankind, under the leadership of Nimrod (whose name means ‘rebel’) rebelled against God’s command to spread over the earth multiply and gain mastery over it. Nimrod was a builder of cities {**Gen. 10:8-12**} but **Genesis 1:28** {refer also to **Gen. 9:1**} says

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air

Mankind was of one common language¹⁰ and in opposition to God for **Genesis 11:4** tells us what the people said:

“Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

After the Great Flood mankind determined to hold together in a defiant act against God and they wished to have a badge, a standard, something by which they could be known and in which they could all glory as a symbol of their unity. Because mankind did not want to disperse but rather take advantage of human skill, intellect and energy an immense building project was begun to make a ‘name’ [a ‘sem’; token, sign, banner, ensign, or mark of identification] for himself.

What was this ‘name’? The Sero or Sema would have been a symbol of consolidated greatness, a loftiness and pride that was in the language of the time a ‘Sema-Rama’.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the world wide Internet, ironically called a ‘web’, has power to influence and empower people (as well as ‘catch’ unwary persons in things like pornography), bears a striking resemblance, at least in type, to the motivation in building the Tower of Babel.

Thus we derive the name of the mythic Semi-ramis who is said to have represented the wife of Nimrod (although that was probably not her actual name). ‘Semi-ramis’ became the emblem of all the Assyrian princes and can be identified with the pagan goddesses Ashtaroth, Astarte, Aphrodite, and Venus. This is the short history of the origin of idolatry and paganism in ancient Babylon. Now we can understand why this woman is called “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”.

The Tower of Babel project was an expression of pride and rebellion against God’s directive and this tower¹¹ became a symbol of their God-defying disobedience and pride¹². The danger with this enterprise was that it would have provided a ‘fertile’ environment to proliferate the very thing that is embodied in MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT—namely the universal rejection of the One True God and a universal substitution of a false religion. It would also lead to the eventual control and enslavement mankind at the hands of a select few individuals for **Gen. 11:6** tells us

And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them”.

A tower (probably a ziggurat, i.e., a stepped pyramid like the ones the Egyptians started with) was being built up into the sky on the plains of Shinar, that is Babylon. Nimrod called his first and capital city, “Babylon” or ‘Bab-El’ which in the language of the day meant ‘*gate of God*’. However, in Hebrew, this word ironically sounds like the word for ‘*confused*’. God ‘came down’ to look at what was going on and destroyed the work of man by the introduction of human languages¹³. **Gen. 11:9** tells us

Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Mankind did disperse as God desired but he continues to concentrate together and build large cities. Man’s rebellion did not stop there, but continues on to this day in various forms and functions, but always with the same underlying anti-God mentality that rebels against a holy, righteous but loving God. The belief that “I am my own god” and I don’t need anyone telling me what I can and cannot do.

It is interesting to note that mankind may have inadvertently (or perhaps intentionally) reversed the effects of the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. If one goes onto the World Wide Web or Internet one can find translators which will convert any message into a variety of languages and send them around the world in seconds. The Internet also contains millions of pictures and videos – perhaps this is how the image of the 1st BEAST is made to come to ‘life’!

¹¹ This structure is adequately illustrated by a characteristic Mesopotamian building called the ziggurat which was designed like a ‘stepped pyramid’. The Assyro-Babylonian word *zigguratu* denotes a sacred temple tower and means a ‘pinnacle’ or ‘mountaintop’. The Egyptians would re-design this structure by filling-in the steps with carved stone blocks to build the characteristic flat faces of a pyramid.

¹² Later both Assyrian and Babylonian kings greatly prided themselves upon the height of their temples and boasted of having their tops as high as heaven. But Nimrod’s tower at the ancient site of Babylon was the prototype for all the others that came afterward.

¹³ It is interesting to note that God, in the business of redemption, reversed the effect at the Tower of Babel on Pentecost when he gave the gift of “ears”. Each man heard the gospel in his own language and dialect!

The great prostitute's title also includes the label: THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES. We have already seen the significance of the woman as a 'prostitute'; but here she is also called the 'mother' of prostitutes. That means that every false pagan and religious system was "birthed" by the ancient Babylonian system – MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT. This would include all the cults, various -isms, and apostate Christianity¹⁴.

This GREAT PROSTITUTE is shown holding a golden cup in her hand, filled with spiritual adulteries and corruption. We have seen this image before in **Revelation 14:8** and **16:19**. This imagery is also found in the Old Testament:

Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD'S hand that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. – Jeremiah 51:7.

What is interesting is that one evil system (MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT) will be replaced with another one (worship of the 1st Beast – anti-Christ). I believe that the "mystery of iniquity (lawlessness)" already at work that Paul talks about in **2 Thessalonians 2:7** refers to the false religion of this woman.

APPLICATION:

The rebellion and false religion promoted in ancient Babylon by Nimrod is basically the same old lie of Satan: Namely, that a man can be a god and the end of life is physical pleasure and gratification. Indeed, Nimrod tried to build a high tower (a ziggurat, or 'stepped' pyramid) high into the sky and he was energized by that ancient serpent, Satan, the 'prince of the power of the air'. Because of man's inherent desire to disobey, he would have been successful if God had not intervened by disrupting communication by the infusion of new languages. The Apostle Paul tells us in **Eph 2:2** that we ".....once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience". As believers we need to continuously watch and pray, be vigilant and 'sober' that we do not fall into the trap of pride, rebellion and disobedience.

Note finally that this 'great harlot' who intoxicated the world with her false religion is herself drunk! Drunkenness is characterized by the loss of the ability to think clearly and as result one loses good judgment and there is a tendency to also lose touch with reality.

So, this false religious system has not only deceived others into trusting a false 'gospel' by making them drink of the 'wine of her fornication', that is participate in her defiled spiritual thinking, but she herself is deceived (intoxicated) and out of touch with reality and does not realize that ultimate judgment is coming upon her.

Why? Because of the result of her spiritually perverted thinking was the shedding of the blood of innocent believers – the martyrs. This pseudo-Christian system is intoxicated by her acts of violence against those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John is left marveling at this scene in great amazement – perhaps he did not expect something so attractive and enticing on the outside to be so defiled on the inside.

¹⁴ For example: Jehovah Witnesses and the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, Christian Science, Mormonism, New Age, Spiritism, Theosophy, Buddhism, Hinduism, Baha'i Faith, Unity Church, Unity School of Christianity, Unification Church, Luciferian Society, Cult of Isis, Universalism, Islam.

REV. 17:7-8 ➤ THE IDENTITY OF THE BEAST WITH 7 HEADS & 10 HORNS

[7 *But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is”.*]

However, now the angel asks John why he is marveling and perhaps indicating to us that he is still trying to figure out the significance of this amazing sight. Perhaps you are too. Well, he (and we) will now be told.

This Beast has a supernatural component since he “*was and is not and will ascend out of the bottomless pit*” [i.e., the abyss we were introduced to in **Rev. 9:1-2** as part of the 5th TRUMPET JUDGMENT].

We are told in **Rev. 9:11** that the demonic locust army “*.....had as king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.*”

We were also told in **Rev. 11:7** concerning the demise of the TWO WITNESSES:

Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

However, we know that it is probably the anti-Christ that will destroy them since he is the one who makes war against the saints and kills them {**Rev. 13:7**}, thus referring to a person.

We are also told in **Rev. 13:1** that this 10-horned, 7-headed Beast rises from the sea [of humanity] and in **2 Thess. 2:3, 8-9** Paul identifies him with a man—the ‘man of sin’, the ‘son of perdition’ and the ‘lawless one’.

In **Rev. 13:2** we are told that Satan gives this Beast his power, throne and great authority

From these passages we can fit all these pieces of information together to get the following picture. Satan will probably use the ‘king’ of the demonic creatures to possess and empower the anti-Christ while he vicariously receives worship through him.

This Beast is also foists a grand deception upon the world for we are told that “*.....the beast that was, and is not, and yet is*”. This means that the beast represents himself as someone or something in history, could not really be but yet still is.

This Beast, this anti-Christ will go into perdition – that is destruction. Ultimately he and his cohort, the False Prophet, will be the first ones thrown into the LAKE OF FIRE {**Rev. 19:20**}.

But only those who are not true believers [*names are not written in the Book of Life*] will be fooled and marvel at the Beast and follow him, that is, receive his mark and worship him and his image. Paul talks about this in **2 Thess. 2:3-12** in the context of the Lord’s 2nd Coming:

In contrast to this we are told in **Rev. 11:17** and **16:5** that Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, is the “*One Who was, Who is and Who is to come*”.

REV. 17:9-13 ➤ THE CONFEDERACY OF THE “GREAT PROSTITUTE”

[9 “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. 10 There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. 12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. 13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”]

The seven heads of the beast are seven mountains upon which the harlot sits. Many have identified this place with Rome (and not the literal city of Babylon) for it is said that “Rome is the city built on seven hills” and each hill has a name¹⁵. Although other cities like Constantinople, Brussels, and especially Jerusalem [Zion] have hills with names, none have exactly seven which have always been associated with the city.



Figure 17-1. The Seven Hills of Rome (Southeast of the Vatican) Showing Their Modern Names.

¹⁵ The seven hills of early Rome were called the (1) Cermalus, (2) Cispius, (3) Fagutal, (4) Oppius, (5) Palatium, (6) Sucusa and (7) Velia and all figured prominently in Roman mythology, religion, and politics. Initially and traditionally, the seven hills were occupied by small settlements and not grouped or recognized as a city called Rome. The inhabitants of the seven hills began to participate in a series of religious games which started to bond the groups together. The city of Rome thus came into being as these separate settlements acted as a group, draining the marshy valleys between them and turning them into markets and forums. Of the seven hills of current Rome five; the Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Quirinal and Viminal hills, are populated with monuments, buildings, and parks. The Capitoline now hosts the Municipality of Rome, and the Palatine Hill is an archaeological area. The original city was held by tradition to have been founded by Romulus on the Palatine Hill.

There is however another, more significant, scriptural reason for believing that the place the harlot sits is not the literal city of Babylon¹⁶. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied the complete destruction of the original Babylon. See **Isaiah 13:17-22** and **Jeremiah 51:24-29, 36-39, 62-64**. If that is the case then the rebellion and false religion of ancient Babylon was transferred to that city in John's day which "..... *reigns over the kings of the earth*". That would be none other than Rome. And indeed, Daniel's prophecy identifies the fourth kingdom or beast with the one that came after the Greeks, that is, Rome! (See **Daniel 7:1-8; 8:19-27**).

However, the seven mountains are also *seven kings* and some have tried to identify them with the emperors of Rome. The first twelve emperors of Rome are listed in Table 17-1. The first Roman emperor, Augustus, was Octavian – the adopted son of Julius Caesar. Titus was the general who led the Roman army in destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Roman emperor Domitian had the Apostle John exiled to the isle of Patmos.

Table 17-1. First Twelve Roman Emperors.

Name	Reign
Augustus	27 BC – 14 AD
Tiberius	14 – 37
Caligula	37 – 41
Claudius	41 – 54
Nero	54 – 68
Galba	68 – 69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69 – 79
Titus	79 – 81
Domitian	81 – 96
Nerva	96 – 98

It is obvious from this table that even though **verse 18** tells us that the woman is "..... *that great city that rules over the kings of the earth*" which was Rome in John's day; the seven kings are probably not Roman emperors. Why? Because Revelation tells us that only five of the kings had appeared with the sixth presently ruling. At the time of John's writing of Revelation, it was Domitian who was emperor of Rome and there were *ten*, not *five*, others before him. Even if one discounts Galba, Otho and Vitellius (because of their short reigns) seven is still two too many.

What else could the seven mountains represent? A clue is found by taking verses 5 and 9 together. In this passage the woman is the "*Mother of Harlots*" and we have established that *spiritual adultery* is what is meant. Upon this subject it is interesting to note that mountains were also the places of choice to set up altars for false worship. Notice what Jeremiah says:

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. – **Jeremiah 3:6**.

¹⁶ Note that Jerusalem is figuratively called "Sodom" and "Egypt" in **Revelation 11:8**.

What else could the seven mountains, i.e., kings, be referring to? Kingdoms! In the prophecy of Daniel chapter 2 we read about the demise of all the world systems symbolized by the gold, silver, bronze, iron and iron mixed with clay image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the latter part of **Daniel 2:35** we read; *"..... And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.* Here the *stone* is Christ Jesus the King of kings and the *great mountain* is the kingdom He establishes when He returns. (See also **Daniel 7:12-14**). Thus a mountain (king) can refer to a kingdom (which in turn corresponds to a king).

Both **Isaiah 2:2,3** and **Micah 4:1,2** also mention a mountain in reference to God's kingdom being established. The verses are nearly identical.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Finally, Jeremiah symbolizes Babylon as a "destroying mountain" that in turn will be destroyed.

*"And I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion in your sight," says the LORD. "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth," says the LORD. "And I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain." – **Jeremiah 51:24-25**.*

So, it is evident from scripture that these seven mountains or kings can represent kingdoms, but which ones? I believe a study of Daniel's prophecy reveals four of the seven kingdoms: Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman. To these Seiss adds the Egyptian and Assyrian kingdoms. Thus, five kings (kingdoms) have fallen: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Grecian. One is: Roman. One (the 7th) is to come. One (the 8th) is the little horn of **Daniel 7:7, 8**; the man of lawlessness in **2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4** and the 1st beast from the sea with a mouth speaking proud words and blasphemies in **Revelation 13:5**.

Remember, we must interpret these kingdoms from John's historical viewpoint.

Notice carefully that the 8th king is identified as the beast from the sea which *"..... once was; now is not; and yet will come"*. Also, note the contrast between what is said of Christ Jesus: *"..... the one who was; who is and is to come"*. He belongs to the seven kings; i.e., the seven kingdoms. That is, he contains elements of all seven of the kingdoms that came before him (of which five are 'fallen', one is and one is yet to come). This is exactly the case when comparing **Daniel 7:2-8** with his description in **Revelation 13:1,2**.

Also, note the contrast between what is said of Christ Jesus: *"..... the one who was; who is and is to come"*. The beast is said to come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. Perhaps this is reference to a demonic possession by the king of the demonic locusts who is called the *"angel of the Abyss"* whose name is *Apollyon* which means *"destroyer"*, another name for Satan. **Revelation 13:2** tells us that the beast receives the power, throne and great authority from the dragon, Satan. This will be no ordinary man – he will be Satan incarnate complete with a fake resurrection: the fatal wound that will be healed.

Each of the 10 kings receives power or authority for *one hour* with the 1st beast (man of sin). It is interesting to note that the destruction of “Babylon” takes place in one hour. See **Revelation 18:10, 17, 19**.

REV. 17:14 ➤ **VICTORY OF THE LAMB IS FORETOLD**

[14 “*These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*”]

What a difference the LORD makes! In **Rev. 13:7** the 10-horned Beast makes war with the saints and overcomes them. Here his armies make war with the Lamb, Jesus Christ, but to say they have ‘bit off more than they can chew’ is a tremendous understatement. The Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings, the righteous and powerful judge, and those with Him are called, chosen and faithful—this is no contest. The

REV. 17:15 ➤ **THE WATERS WHERE THE “GREAT PROSTITUTE” SITS**

[15 *Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.”*]

Remember the description of the rise of the first beast, the Man of Sin or anti-Christ from **Rev. 13:1**:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

We saw that the ‘sea’ was referring to all ‘humanity’ {cp. **Dan. 7:2-3**}. Here again ‘waters’ are used to metaphorically refer to people from all over the world; from every ethnic group, social class and language. The great harlot’s influence was extensive in scope, reaching to every part of this world.

REV. 17:16-17 ➤ **THE DESTRUCTION OF THE “GREAT PROSTITUTE”**

[16 “*And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.*”]

The “man of sin” (1st beast) and confederacy of seven kings all hate the Great Prostitute and ultimately and completely destroy her. Why? Because the beast is jealous for worship – he wants to be the sole object worshipped and he is tired of being controlled (i.e., ‘ridden’) by the false religious system that has ruled over mankind.

I believe this event appears to be described in **Daniel 8:23-25**:

“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means”. – **Daniel 8:23-25.**

Daniel further goes on to state:

“Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god for he shall exalt himself above them all.” – **Daniel 11:36, 37.**

So the “little horn”, “the man of sin”, turns on the false religion riding him and destroys her. In her place he assumes to be worshipped as described by Paul:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. – **2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.**

This is why the beast utterly destroys the woman: he wants absolutely no competition.

REV. 17:18 ➤ CITY OF THE GREAT HARLOT’S POWER

[18 *And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth*”.]

The woman is a great city (of John’s day) that rules over the kings of the earth. There is only one city that fits this description in John’s day – Rome. There, the emperors were worshipped as gods. This goes along with verse 9 which states that the woman also sits on 7 hills. Many classical writers refer to Rome as the “*city of seven hills*” upon which this city was built. Each hill even had a name.

In 1825, on the occasion of the Jubilee, Pope Leo XII struck a medal bearing on one side his one image and on the other that of the Church of Rome symbolized as a woman. She is appears to be seated on a globe holding in her left hand a staff in the shape of a cross and in her outstretched right hand a cup of communion [refer to Figure 17-2]. Around the medal is an inscription which reads: SEDET: SUPER UNIVERSUM; Latin for ‘seated over the whole world’.



Figure 17-2. Medal Struck by Pope Leo XII to Celebrate the Year of Jubilee in 1825 Depicting the Roman Catholic Church Sitting on the World and Holding Out the Cup of Communion.

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