

THE SECOND COMING Part 8
The Destruction of Babylon The Mother of Harlots
Revelation 17:1-18

Introduction

Chapter 17 focuses on the Babylonian religious system and chapter 18 on its commercial and political system. Both will be destroyed.

The Harlot and the Beast (17:1-6a)

One of the seven angels who had the 7 bowls (1) = directly connects the destruction of Babylon with those final plagues described in chapter sixteen.

Great harlot = the term harlot (pornees) applied to Babylon matches the practice of fornication (porneia) attributed to her in Rev. 14:8.

- Immorality (14:8) is translated from the Greek word porneia.

Harlot, harlotry, fornication, adultery are words often used for idolatry and other forms of religious apostasy.

- Used of Tyre – Is. 23:15-17
- Nineveh – Nahum 3:1-7
- Israel – Jer. 13:27, Hosea 1:2ff

Note: ancient Babylon (Babel) was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12) and was the site of the first false religious system (Gen. 11:1-9).

Who sits on many waters (1) = the people of the earth. See verse 15.

The kings of the earth committed immorality (2) = could be translated harlotry.

And those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality (harlotry). – Rev. 13:8, 17:8

The wilderness (3) = alludes to Isaiah's oracle concerning the fall of Babylon; including the prophecy "fallen, fallen is Babylon. – Is. 21:1-2 & 8-9

- Compare with Rev. 14:8 & 18:2

Woman (3) = refers to "Babylon the Great." – See verse 18

Scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names = scarlet symbolized luxury and splendor (2Sam. 1:24)

- Scarlet is also associated with sin. – Isaiah 1:18

Beast full of blasphemous names having seven heads and ten horns = refers to the antichrist – Rev. 13:1 & 5 (Dan. 7:25, 11:36)

Having seven heads and ten horns = will be explained in verses 9-13.

And the woman was clothed ... precious stones and pearls (4) = the woman dressed as a harlot would, to draw attention to herself.

- Part of the attractiveness was her great wealth.

In her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality (4).

- Abominations (bdelugma) = something that is disgusting, loathsome, putrid, to emit a stench. Note the use of bdelugma in the Septuagint:
 - For a variety of sexual sins and the sacrificing of children to Molech – Leviticus 18:1-30
 - Idol worship – Dt. 12:30-31, Mal. 2:11

The unclean things of her immorality (4) = They will worship the beast, a stature of the beast, and Satan himself. – Rev. 13:4 & 15

- This worship will involve all the immoral pagan practices condemned in the Bible and what has been witnessed throughout history, including today.

“BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (5)

- The mother of harlots = from the pagan system founded at the tower of Babel spawned all other forms of counterfeit religions and gospels, that have sprung up over the centuries.
 - All false religions are harlots in the eyes of God.
- And all of the abominations of the earth (5) = She is also the mother of all the abominations of the earth.
 - What God condemns as an abomination, the mother of harlots promotes and so do her offspring.

And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. (6a)

- Witness = from the Greek word martus from which we get “martyr.”
- 2Timothy 3:12 see also 2Tim. 1:8-14

More of the Mystery Explained (17:6b-14)

And when I saw her, I wondered greatly (6b)

- Wondered = speaks of great amazement or astonishment
- Greatly (megas) = exceedingly great

I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her (7) = the explanation is given in verses 8-14.

The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss (8) = this ties him to the description of the beast with the death-wound who was healed – Rev. 13:3, 12 & 14.

And go to destruction (8) = refers to his ultimate demise – Rev. 19:20

And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, **whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.**

- When they see the beast that he was and is not and will come.
 - They followed the beast because of what they saw.
 - Compare with 2Peter 1:16-21

Here is the mind which has wisdom (9) = anticipating the difficulty and complexity of the vision recorded in verse 8.

The explanation: Rev. 17:9-11

The seven heads (9):

- They are seven mountains (kingdoms) on which the woman (Babylon) sits.
- And they are seven kings = synonymous with the seven mountains.
 - Both mountain and king can refer to a nation.

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. (10)

Note: To understand the meaning we must look at this from the historic setting of the apostle John (approx. 95 AD), to whom this explanation is given to clear up his confusion (7).

These seven kingdoms (kings) represent seven nations that dominated or will dominate Israel.

The identity of the five fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece.

One is = The existing nation in 95 AD was Rome

Note: All of these nations were polytheistic pagan nations who practiced the abominations condemned in scripture.

The other has not yet come = in the context of Revelation can only refer to the kingdom of the antichrist.

- And when he comes he must remain a little while. – Rev. 13:5 (12:12)

And the beast which was and is not, is himself an eighth, and is one of the seven (11)

- He was slain and his fatal wound was healed. – Rev. 13:3
- And he goes to destruction = Lake of fire

The Ten Horns (17:12-17)

These ten kings (kingdoms) form a ten-nation confederacy that supporting the beast. Compare with Dan. 2:41-43, Dan. 7:7 and 24-26

- They placed themselves under the authority of the beast (12 -13)

They will wage war against the Lamb and be destroyed. (14)

They along with the beast will totally wipe out the harlot (16)

- Make her desolate = void of all her wealth
- Naked = the harlot will be fully exposed as a fraud.
- Will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire = nothing left

Rev. 17:17 = they will not know they will be executing God's judgment on the harlot.

The God they have blasphemed will move them about as pawns on a chessboard.

Closing thought: Psalm 2