

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

### Revelation 17:1-18 | Session 22 | The Woman Rides the Beast

In the book of Revelation, there are seven pairs of visions given to John. The first pair of visions pertains to events that are taking place in Heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on Earth.

- The First Vision, in Heaven (4:1-5:14).
- The First Vision, on Earth (6:1-7:8)
- The Second Vision, in Heaven (7:9-8:6).
- The Second Vision, on Earth (8:7-11:14).
- The Third Vision, in Heaven (11:15-18).
- The Third Vision, on Earth (11:19).
- The Fourth Vision, in Heaven (12:1-12)
- The Fourth Vision, on Earth (12:13-13:18)
- The Fifth Vision, in Heaven (14:1-5)
- The Fifth Vision, on Earth (14:6-20)
- The Sixth Vision, in Heaven (15:1-8)
- The Sixth Vision, on Earth (16:1-18:24)

### THE SIXTH VISION, ON EARTH (16:1-18:24)

#### Babylon The Great

Verse 1,2 —

Revelation is not always written chronologically; however, chapter 16 was in chronological order. In 16:17-19 we read that God remembered Babylon and would give that city *the fierceness of His wrath*. While those verses only tell us that Babylon came into God's remembrance, the result, as we will see in chapter 18, is the destruction of that city. But first, in chapter 17, we get more insight into what is happening within the chronology of chapter 16. The Seven Vials of God's wrath have just been poured out on the Earth in His final Judgment, and now one of the seven angels who **had one of seven vials** came and talked with John. It is unknown which angel, but it is likely the seventh angel—his vial destroyed Babylon, as we will see in chapter 18.

The angel refers to the **judgment of the great whore**. The Greek word for whore is *porne*. It is translated as harlot eight times in the NT and **whore** four times (a woman who sells her body for sexual uses). Is this talking about an actual woman? We will see that it is symbolic of a depraved city, specifically Babylon. In 17:18, Babylon is called **that great city**. Babylon is not just any city. It's referring to a future Babylon that will **sit upon**

**many waters** (explained in 17:15), and is called *that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth (vs. 18) and over peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.*

There are many misinterpretations concerning the identity of Babylon in chapter 17. Probably the most popular is that it is Rome and the seat of the Pope. Babylon in chapters 17 and 18 is not Rome. How do I know? Because it is called Babylon. There is no reason to make this into something besides Babylon. Some believe this cannot refer to Babylon since that city was destroyed long ago. It must be Rome! In Scripture, Babylon is used over 300 times and refers to literal Babylon each time. There are zero reasons to take it as anything else here unless you feel like making something up—which many people do.

What do we know about Babylon? One thing most people know, Christian or not, is the tower of Babel. It was where mankind said, “*God, we don’t need you!*” Babel is a compound word. In Hebrew, *el* means God, and *Bab* means gates: *The Gates of the Gods*. Later Babylon was used by God to carry away the children of Israel into captivity, Daniel being one of the young men to be taken from his homeland (Daniel 1:3-6).

Babylon will be a force for cultural influence and debauchery worldwide. It was known for being the city that practiced idolatry and fornication. Verse 2 says the kings of the earth have committed fornication there. Also, the earth's inhabitants have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Daniel recorded his firsthand account of the fall of Babylon in Daniel 5. Belshazzar was the king at the time of Babylon’s fall. Daniel says Belshazzar held a great feast and served wine from golden and silver vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. As they drank from these holy vessels, they praised the gods of gold, silver, or brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone (Daniel 5:4). At that time, fingers of man’s hand appeared to the shock of everyone, and wrote upon the wall MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. The words, written by the finger of God, said, Thou are weighed and have been found wanting; tonight thy kingdom Belshazzar will be divided. The king could not decipher their meaning, so he called Daniel to interpret. That very night Darius the Mede entered the city of Babylon without a fight, took the kingdom, and Belshazzar was slain.

What is my point in telling that story? The events unfolding in chapter 17 have never occurred in human history. Look at what Isaiah prophesied about Babylon (Is. 13:19-20): if that is the case, then Babylon will be rebuilt, become the seat of idolatry and fornication in the world, and be destroyed in the final Judgment from God on Earth.

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,

The beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,  
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

**20** It shall never be inhabited,  
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation:  
Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there;  
Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

## THE WOMAN RIDES THE BEAST

Verse 3—

**And he** (the angel of the seventh vial) **carried me away in the spirit**. Or by spiritual power. **Into the wilderness: and I saw a woman**. This **woman** is defined for us in verse 18 as **that great city**. **The woman** is Babylon, whom John saw **sitting upon a scarlet beast**. We will identify this beast more clearly in verse 8, but this **beast** is Antichrist, who is **full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns**.

*We do not need to interpret this vision. It will be done for us. We must believe what God says and then try to understand it.<sup>1</sup>*

What we see here, and it will be made evident later, is the superhuman stage of the Antichrist and the vast power and absolute dominion he has over the entire Earth. The **beast...having seven heads and ten horns**, indicates a Satanic Confederacy of superhuman men under the leadership of the **beast**.

Verse 4—

**And the woman** (city of Babylon) **was arrayed in purple and scarlet color and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations** (foul and detestable) **and filthiness of her fornication**. This great city is a wondrous and attractive idolatrous system and practices.

Verse 5—

The name written on the woman's forehead was likely **"Babylon the Great."** The word **mystery** and the rest of the KJV statement in all CAPS was a translator's preference—**mystery...the mother of harlots and abominations**. A **mystery** is something that was not made known (a secret). The rest of the statement describes what Babylon the Great will be like. Babylon, from the very beginning, was the **mother** of all fornication.

Verse 6—

**And I saw the woman** (the city of Babylon that reigns over all the earth) **drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of martyrs of Jesus**. This is more evidence of the martyrdoms that will occur during the Tribulation. We have already seen this in Rev. 13:7. The book of Daniel also refers to or alludes to these martyrdoms: Daniel 7:21; 11:7; 12:1,7. That John **wondered with great admiration** does not mean he *admired the woman*. We attached **admiration** with pleasure. As it's used here, "I wondered exceedingly!"

Verse 7—

The angel, thankfully, helps us understand the **mystery of the woman and the beast...which had seven heads and ten horns**. The explanation begins with **the beast** and will be detailed in verses 8-17. The **woman** only needs one verse of explanation, in verse 18.

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<sup>1</sup> Bullinger E.W. Revelation.

## WHO OR WHAT IS THE BEAST?

Verse 8—

The angel tells us about the Beast's past, present, and future. First, he **was**. This was when the antichrist came on the scene as the peacemaker. Daniel 9:27 tells of how he confirms a covenant for seven years. Second, he

**is not**. In Rev. 13:3, the antichrist was assassinated, "*wounded to death*." Third, **and shall ascend** or *shall be present*. The antichrist will go from mortal to superhuman (or transhuman). This vision of the antichrist coming up from the abyss is seen in 13:1. This is the superhuman stage of the beast—for in 13:3, John saw the mark of the wound on him. This is when he receives great power from Satan (13:2).

Verse 9—

**And here is the mind with wisdom**. That is the same phrase we heard regarding the identification of the antichrist in 13:18 "*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.*" (666). Verse nine, then, connects these two chapters, 13 and 17. **And the seven heads are seven mountains**. Here is where many mistakes are made in identifying Babylon. Many say, "Rome is best known as the *city on seven hills*. Therefore, this must refer to Rome! There are at least three problems with that. 1) At least 100 cities in the world claim they are on seven hills, Cincinnati, Ohio, one of them. 2) All one needs to do is read verse 10 to see that the **seven mountains** represent *seven kings*. 3) It says **seven mountains**, not seven hills.

Verse 10—

Of these kings, **five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come**. There is much guessing as to the identity of these kings. We won't guess. **Five are fallen** at the time of the future vision. **One is**, that is, one is reigning at the time of this vision, and **the other is not yet come; when he cometh, he must continue a short space**; the seventh king begins and will reign for seven years.

Verse 11—

**And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition**. This might mean that the antichrist is the seventh of these future kings and, due to his resurrection, has both a pre and post-fatal wound (**goeth into perdition**), thus is counted as the seventh and eighth.

Verse 12—

We cannot know who or what these ten kings may be. They will be identified late into the Tribulation since they only receive **power as kings for one hour with the beast**.

Verse 13—

**One mind**. I doubt this means they are all in agreement. More likely, they are influenced by a powerful delusion of Satan that will bring them all together as Satan builds his demonic forces. All authority has been turned over to the antichrist.

Verse 14—

These demonic kings **shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them: because he is Lord of lords and King of kings.** Satan has energized this demonic force against Christ at the battle of Armageddon. I would not make a quantum leap and say ***the called, chosen, and faithful*** are the body of Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Remember, Jesus was speaking ONLY to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24), not to the body of Christ. Those who accompany Jesus at His return are *clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev. 19:14). Revelation 19:8 says the fine linen is for the righteousness of*

*the saints.* I believe Saints always refer to Israel, not the Body of Christ. Those clothed in white are described in Revelation 3:5 as the overcomer during the Tribulation.

Verse 15—

**The waters** refer to the **peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.** John saw the waters in Revelation 13:1 when the *beast rose out of the sea.* We have an interpretation now for that 13:1 passage. The Antichrist will rise out of the people of the world.

Verse 16, 17—

These ten kings, represented by the **ten horns,** are haters of Babylon; they are somehow the instruments of Babylon’s destruction, **for God hath put it in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.** God is in this all the way. He will work out his divine plan. God is in control, and his words will be fulfilled.

WHO IS THE WOMAN?

Verse 18—

Again, we have the clearest identity of the woman who rides the beast. Babylon is Babylon, and in Chapter 18, it will be destroyed in one hour. It is a city, not a system, religion, spirit, individual, or corporation.