

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

### Revelation 17:1-18 | Session 20 | 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

THE VISION OF THE WHORE AND THE FORNICATING KINGS

Verse 1,2 —

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, since his vial contained God's wrath concerning **Babylon**.

In chapter 16:19, we read 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 some details filled in for us.

The **angel** talking with John refers to the **judgment of the great whore**. There is no watering down of this verse in the KJV. It uses the noun **whore**. This word has been softened in some translations as a *prostitute*. But the Greek word for **whore** is a strong word: it is *porne*. We get our English word pornographic or pornography from

*porne*. Here it is used in the sense of a woman who sells her body for sexual use. God is about to judge **the great whore that sitteth upon many waters**.

Is this talking about an actual woman? Here, no. We see **the great whore**, in the context of the chapter, symbolic of a depraved city, specifically Babylon. In the chapter, Babylon is called **that great city** (17:18). Babylon is not just any city. The **great whore** is 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*. Future Babylon will hold great sway over the nations of the Earth.

There are many interpretations concerning the identity of Babylon mentioned in chapter 17. The most popular interpretation is that it is Rome and the seat of the Pope. Some believe this cannot refer to literal Babylon since that city was destroyed long ago. So, it must be Rome! I do not agree. Rather, I believe this is literal Babylon.

The primary reason that I believe this is literal Babylon is because it is called Babylon, not Rome. Unless the passage says otherwise, there is no reason to make this into something besides Babylon.

In Scripture, Babylon is used nearly 300 times, and each time it refers to literal Babylon. There are zero reasons to take it as anything else here unless you feel like making something up—which many people do.

One thing most people, Christian or not, know about Babylon is the account of tower of Babel. Babel is a compound word. In Hebrew, *el* means God, and *Bab* means gates: *The Gates of the Gods*. It was there that mankind said, “*God, we don’t need you!*” For that, God scattered mankind across the earth.

Later, Babylon’s King, Nebuchadnezzar, was used by God to take the people of Judah into captivity. Daniel was one of the young boys to be taken from his homeland (Daniel 1:3-6). But Babylon would eventually fall.

Daniel recorded his firsthand account of the fall of Babylon in Daniel 5. Belshazzar was the king at the time of Babylon’s fall. According to Daniel’s account, Belshazzar held a lavish feast and used golden and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to serve wine. 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). During the drunken feast, a man’s hand appeared to the shock of everyone, and wrote upon the wall: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN (Daniel 5:25). The words, written by the finger of God, were a mystery to the king. He could not decipher the meaning, so he called Daniel to interpret. The interpretation was,

*God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed and found wanting.*

That very night, Darius the Mede entered the city of Babylon without a fight and Belshazzar was slain, and the kingdom fell.

Old Babylon was known for being the city that practiced idolatry and fornication. Verse 2 says in the new and revived Babylon, **the kings of the earth have committed fornication** there. Also, the earth’s inhabitants have been **made drunk with the wine of her fornication**.

Here is what Isaiah prophesied about Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-20):

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.

Babylon, while not thriving today by any means, was not destroyed like Sodom. Isaiah's prophecy is still in the future.

It is logical to believe that Babylon will be rebuilt as the capital city for an entire region of a revived Babylonian Empire that will be a global center for cultural influence, idolatry, fornication, and debauchery before its destruction in God's final judgment.

#### THE WOMAN RIDES THE BEAST

Verse 3 —

**And he** (the angel of the seventh vial) **carried me away in the spirit**. The word **spirit** is the Greek word *pneuma*. *Pneuma* can mean a gentle wind or breath. It can also mean the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, or the spirit of a man. The word *pneuma* always has to be interpreted. Sometimes the context helps, but not always. In this verse, most translations, except for the KJV, translate it as Spirit, uppercase. But it could also mean *the angel* carried John away *with spiritual power*. Either way, it does not change the fact that John was **carried away...**

**...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 here's a heads-up; this **beast** is Antichrist, who is **full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns**.

Nineteenth-century theologian, E. W. Bullinger, said this about John's vision: *"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 clear 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**, shows a Satanic Confederacy of superhuman men under the leadership of the **beast**.

#### THE WOMAN FLAUNTS HER FORNICATION

Verse 4 —

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

**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.** Many who think this refers to Rome have in mind the Catholic Church, decked out with icons, golden altars, statues, candles, and other ornate religious articles.

When I see the perversion of transsexuals today, and drag queens, flaunting their disgusting and despicable lifestyle, I think of this passage. Though it has nothing to do with Rome or drag queens, this great city is replete with alluring yet despicable idolatrous systems and practices.

#### THE NAME OF THE WHORE

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** (*porne*) **and abominations.** A **mystery** is something that was not made known (a secret). **Abomination** means foul or detestable. The statement describes what Babylon the Great will be like. Babylon, from the very beginning, was the **mother** of all fornications.

#### THE WOMAN DRUNK ON THE BLOOD OF JEWS

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.**

The **Saints** in Scripture always refer to Jewish believers. The **martyrs of Jesus**, if this is indeed a separate group, most likely means Gentiles who believe in Jesus as Messiah and who have not taken the mark of the beast during the seven years.

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 Babylon*, like the way we attach **admiration** to pleasure. As it's used here, John means, "I wondered exceedingly!"

#### THE ANGEL PREPARES TO EXPLAIN THE MYSTERY

Verse 7 —

The angel, thankfully, helps us understand the **mystery of the woman and the beast...which had seven heads and ten horns.** We've already realized who they are, but 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.

## THE BEAST JOHN SAW WAS AND IS NOT

### 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, making or confirming a covenant. 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. His counterfeit resurrection*. The antichrist will go from mortal to superhuman (AI, 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 authority from Satan (13:2).

## THE BEAST'S SEVEN HEADS EXPLAINED

### 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 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 a couple of 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, or seven heads*. *The mountain is a further description of the heads.*

## SEVEN KINGS

### 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** 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.

## THE BEAST IS DOOMED TO HELL

### Verse 11 —

**And the beast** (The Antichrist) **that was, and is not, even he is the eighth and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition**. This is another tough one to interpret, but it might mean that the antichrist is the seventh of these future kings and, because of his "resurrection", has both a pre and post-fatal wound (**goeth into perdition**). Therefore he is counted as the seventh and eighth. Without making up a lot of stuff, that's about the best interpretation I can come up with.

## TEN HORNS AND TEN KINGS

### 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.**

## THE TEN KINGS OF ONE MIND

### 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.

## THE TEN KINGS MAKE WAR WITH AND ARE OVERCOME BY THE LAMB

### 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 in the battle of Armageddon. I would not make the quantum leap, as some do, and say **the called, chosen, and faithful** are the body of Christ. I do not agree with that notion for all the reasons we have discussed over the past several months.

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.* The *Saints* always refer to Israel, not the Body of Christ. Those clothed in white are described in Revelation 3:5 as the overcomers during the Tribulation. This is all about Israel.

## THE WATERS WHERE THE WHORE SITS ARE IDENTIFIED

### 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.

## THE TEN KINGS BECOME GOD'S INSTRUMENTS OF BABYLON'S DESTRUCTION

### Verse 16, 17 —

These ten kings, whoever they are, represented by the **ten horns**, are haters of Babylon. They are the instruments of Babylon's destruction because **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.

## THE WOMAN IDENTIFIED AS BABYLON

### Verse 18 —

Again, we have the clearest identity of the woman who rides the beast. Babylon is Babylon. In our next Bible class, Chapter 18, Babylon will be destroyed in one hour. Not a system, religion, spirit, individual, or corporation. It is a literal city that will literally be destroyed.