

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

Introduction

“Chapter 17 may be beyond our comprehension, but it helps to be aware of the contrasts in the book of Revelation. The coming one-world leader is the Antichrist, but the true world Leader is the Christ. The coming one-world bride of Antichrist is Mystery Babylon the Great the Mother of Harlots, but the Bride of Christ is the Church. The reign of Antichrist will produce the Tribulation Period, but the reign of Christ will produce the Millennium. The Antichrist will establish his headquarters in Babylon, but the Jews will get Jerusalem and the Church will get the New Jerusalem.

Mystery Babylon is a woman. In chapter 12 Israel is portrayed as a woman clothed in the sun who will give birth to Jesus. In chapter 19 the Church is portrayed as a woman clothed in linen, clean and bright, who will marry Jesus. In chapter 17 Mystery Babylon the Great is portrayed as a woman clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. Mystery Babylon is a harlot, but Israel and the Church are good women.

Mystery Babylon has a double identity. She is a bad woman who adorns herself with riches, but she is also a city who makes others rich. Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem are good women who use their riches to help others and they are holy cities.”

(taken from The Book of Revelation: The Smart Guide to the Bible Series by Daymond R. Duck)

“Any interpretation of Revelation 17 and 18 is difficult because expositors have not agreed as to the details of their interpretations. In general, however, it is helpful to consider chapter 17 as dealing with Babylon as an ecclesiastical or spiritual entity and chapter 18 as dealing with Babylon as a political entity. It is also helpful in chapter 17 to distinguish the vision in verses 1 through 6 from the interpretation in verses 7 through 18.”

(taken from A Revelation of Jesus Christ by John F. Walvoord)

1. Invitation to View the Judgment of the Great Harlot—Rev. 17:1-2

- The destruction of Babylon represents false religion
- Symbolized as the great whore
- Great waters—many nations ruled by Babylon

“The picture of the woman as utter evil signifies spiritual adultery, portraying those who are untrue to this relationship. The symbolism of spiritual adultery is not ordinarily used of heathen nations who know not God, but always of people who outwardly carry the name of God while actually worshiping and serving other gods. The concept of spiritual adultery is frequently used in describing the apostasy of Israel (cf. Ezek. 16 and 23; all of Hosea). Characteristically, the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the husband of Israel (cf. Isa. 54:1-8; Jer. 3:14; 31:32). In the New Testament the church is viewed as a virgin destined to be joined to her husband in the future (2 Cor. 11:2), but she is warned against spiritual adultery (James 4:4).

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

2. Vision of the Woman on the Beast—Rev. 17:3-4

“John was said to be (come to be) in the spirit on two previous occasions. 1:10; 4:2. However, in this case he is *carried or borne away in (the) spirit*. The same is the case in 21:10. the reference does not appear to be to the Holy Spirit, seeing that he is carried by the angel, but to a state of spiritual ecstasy.

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by J.D. Smith)

- Beast—same as Rev. 13:1
- Woman is not the beast, therefore ecclesiastical power dominant role
- Prior to chapter 13 where Beast has all power

“The fact that the woman, representing the apostate church is in such close association with the beast, which is guilty of utter blasphemy, indicates the depth to which apostasy will ultimately descend. The only form of a world church recognized in the Bible is this apostate world church destined to come into power after the true church has been raptured.”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

3. The Name of the Woman—Rev. 17:5

- Mystery
- Babylon the Great
- Mother of Harlots
- Abominations of the earth

4. The Woman Drunken with the Blood of Martyrs—Rev. 17:6, 7

- The woman is actively engaged in the persecution of true saints
- True throughout history

5. **Origin of the Beast**—Rev. 17:8

- Bottomless pit is the home of Satan and his demons
- Perdition refers to eternal damnation
- The overwhelming satanic power of the final political empire of the world will be most convincing to great masses of mankind
- Not Judas Iscariot or Nero
- That which seemingly went out of existence as history never to be revived is thus miraculously resuscitated at the end of the age

6. **The Seven Heads of the Beast**—Rev. 17:9-11

“Interpreting this verse requires spiritual understanding of the Scriptures (not of world geography). The seven heads on the beast are seven mountains on which the woman sits. This seems simple enough, but it is not as it appears. Revelation 17:10 tells us these seven mountains are not seven actual mountains, but are seven kings (kingdoms or world governments). Herein lies the problem. Is this: (1) a religious system/city that sits on seven mountains, (2) seven kings, or (3) both? The Bible tells us that hills or mountains are a symbol of kingdoms. Therefore, the seven mountains must be seven kings or kingdoms.

Still, some experts say the “seven mountains” is a reference to Rome (the city on seven hills). Even if right, this is only saying the prostitute will control, and be supported by, Rome.”

(taken from *The Book of Revelation: The Smart Guide to the Bible Series* by Daymond R. Duck)

“The final form of world government, symbolized by the eighth beast itself, is the world empire of the great tribulation time. The revived Roman Empire which will be in sway immediately after the rapture of the church is apparently indicated by the seventh head, while the beast, described in verse 11 as the eighth, is the world empire which is destroyed by Jesus Christ at His second coming. In summation, what is described in verses 8 through 11 is the final form of Gentile world power in alliance with apostate religion symbolized by the harlot”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

7. **The Ten Horns of the Beast**—Rev. 17:12-14

“Further detail is given concerning the final stage of the world empire as having a nucleus of ten kings apparently joined in a confederacy represented by the ten horns. These kings in contrast to the seven heads of the beast are kings who rule not in succession but simultaneously at the end time. By comparison with chapter 13, it will be seen that this is the form of the Roman Empire just preceding the world empire. The ten horns’ rule as kings is subject to that of the beast itself, and their sphere of power is brief. They are a phase of the

transmission of power from the various kingdoms to that of the beast itself. This is shown by verse 13 where it is said that these have one mind and shall give their power and strength to the beast. They are further described as making war with the Lamb, a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and their ultimate subjugation under the Lamb is destined to be fulfilled at the second coming. A brief anticipation of this triumph is indicated in verse 14 where the Lamb is prophesied to overcome them as Lord of lords and King of kings. Those on the side of the Lamb are called chosen and faithful.”

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

“The assemblage, not only of the ten kings under the beast, but of all nations of the earth, is to be accounted for as the reaction of the kings of the earth both with respect to the praises accorded to the Lamb and with respect to the devastating and destructive judgments He has brought upon the nations. It is highly significant therefore that this virulent antagonism of the kings is described as culminating in a *war with the Lamb*. The title expresses our Lord’s atoning work. The praises accorded the Lamb are introduced and perpetuated by those who have been redeemed by His blood out of every kindred and tongue and tribe and nation. The judgments have come upon those who have “[denied] the Lord that brought them”.

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by J.D. Smith)

- The purpose is two-fold: retaliation for the evil judgments He has brought upon them; determination to dethrone and destroy Him and to exalt and enthrone the Beast in His stead

8. **Waters**—Rev. 17:15

- Many peoples, multitudes
- The harlot is sitting on them
- Great political power of the Beast but a sharing with the woman who controls the multitudes

8. **Destruction of the Woman**—Rev. 17:16, 17

“During the first half of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist (the Beast) will be submissive to Babylon (the mother and her false religious system, and the city and its one-world government). Now John tells us that the Antichrist and his ten puppet kings (the ten horns) will rise up against Babylon at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period.

The Antichrist will enter the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. Obviously, there is no more room for Babylon and her one-world religion and one-world government. The Antichrist cannot be God and subject to those who worship him at the same time. So someone must

go! The Antichrist and his allies will destroy the harlot's religious system. They will confiscate her expensive clothing, gold, and precious stones, and they will persecute and kill her poor deceived people. The fact that they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire is indicative of the intensity and totality of the harlot's end. Nothing will remain."

(taken from *The Book of Revelation: The Smart Guide to the Bible Series* by Daymond R. Duck)

"However, with the beginning of the second half of the week, the ruler of the revived Roman Empire, who is the political head of the world empire and is himself designated also as "the beast," is able to proclaim himself dictator of the whole world. In this capacity he no longer needs the help and power of the church. He therefore destroys the world church and substitutes for the ecclesiastical apostasy the final form of wickedness in the area of religion, the worship of himself. According to 13:8, all men shall worship the beast except true believers in Christ. Many find a parallel revelation in Daniel 11:36-39 where the willful king likewise puts aside all other deities in favour of the worship of himself."

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)

"At the close of the chapter, the woman is again identified with the great city which reigned over the kings of the earth, referring to the ecclesiastical power and control of the political which characterized portions of church history in the past and will have its climax in this future period. The "great city" is obviously a reference to Babylon in its religious rather than its historical significance. The influence of Babylon on Roman Christianity was partly responsible for the assumption by Rome of political power, namely, the authority of the church over the state. Just as ancient Babylon conquered kings in a political way, so its religious counterpart would dominate political states during the period of Roman papal power."

(taken from *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord)