

## **Revelation 17**

### **Doom of Babylon (NASB)**

*17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."*

The "great prostitute" is Babylon. Babylon is mentioned 287 times in Scripture, 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Jerusalem. Which came first? Babylon or Christianity? There are records of Babylon back to 2300 BC. The exile of Judea dates back to almost 600 BC. Babylon was established by the wife of Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah. Her name was Semiramis and she was the wife of Nimrod, the high priestess of idol worship. Nimrod established the vilest and feared city of the ancient world, Nineveh. The Ninevites were known for their brutality, including beheadings. They were so brutal that when God sent Jonah to speak to them, he headed the opposite direction. Nimrod was the architect of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:10). Nimrod and Semiramis had a son named Tammuz. The Canaanite name of Tammuz was Baal. Canaanite lore taught that Tammuz was born of a virgin. Tammuz was killed by wild beasts and came back to life. NOTE: Although this story pre-dates Jesus and Christianity, it does not pre-date the Hebrew writings about the coming Messiah and the virgin birth. Tammuz is mentioned in Ezekiel 8:14. We can know from the verse that the downfall of Babylon is a done deal. They cannot escape it.

The many waters that the "great prostitute" sits upon are the nations of the world. Revelation 17:15 says *"And he \*said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." The phrase "The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk" means that they behave without restraint. Sin has control of them. That the city is a "harlot" or "prostitute" shows spiritual adultery or idolatry or worship of false gods. Other cities that are called prostitutes and whores include Nineveh (Nahum 3:1 and 4), Tyre (Isaiah 23:15-17) and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:21). The use of the words adultery and prostitute speak of spiritual things. But "acts of immorality" comes from one Greek word, 'porneuo', and means sexual sin.*

*17:3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.*

The angel carried John away. "Into the wilderness" is the Greek word *eremos* and describes a deserted desolate wasteland. The scarlet beast is the Antichrist (Revelation 13:1). The first world unifying thing will be one-world religion. The phrase "full of blasphemous names" means that he will speak against God like no has or ever will (Daniel 11:36 says *"The king will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed, but only until the time of wrath is completed. For what has been determined will surely take place.*) The color scarlet shows luxury (2 Samuel 1:24) and sin (Isaiah 1:18). The seven heads and ten horns will be discussed in verses 9-10.

*17:4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, 5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.*

Another blasphemy. They mocked Him immediately after putting a purple robe on Jesus. (Mark 15:17-20) Her gold cup is full of abominations (abominations are anything that causes disgust or hate). God's gold cup mentioned in Revelation 8:3-4 contains the prayers of the saints. Roman prostitutes wore headbands with their name on it. Here, we see that despite her outward glamour she is nothing but a cheap prostitute. The woman in Revelation 12:1-12 represents Israel. Here the woman represents Babylon and idol worship and false religion. Mystery Babylon is not indicative of a physical place, but rather spiritual worldwide resistance to God. Today the way is being prepared for this with the statement, "We all worship the same God." Just as a reminder, Ishmael, the son of Abraham would have taught to worship the same God but when Mohammed started his religion (Islam) he chose his father's god, which was one of the numerous moon gods. The word "Harlot" symbolizes idolatry. See Judges 2:17, Judges 8:27, Judges 8:33, 1 Chronicles 5:25, 2 Chronicles 21:11, Jeremiah 3:6, 8-9 and Ezekiel 16:30-31. The phrase "Drunk with the blood of the saints" shows a murderous lust for violence. When John is referring to "the saints", he is referring to every believer that has been murdered for their testimonies. These saints were persecuted throughout history by false Christians.

In the days when the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ruled England (known as *Bloody Mary*, some 288 Christians were burnt at the stake for their stand for Christian truth between 1555 and 1558. The first of these martyrs was a man named John Rogers, who as he stood chained to a stake, and as the fire rose around him, up to his legs and shoulders, he rubbed his hands in the flames as if he were washing his hands in cold water. Then he lifted his hands to the heavens and held them high until he was completely consumed by fire. Rogers went to the stake with such calm and dignity that the French Ambassador wrote that he went to his death "as if he was walking to his wedding." His courage was so evident that the huge crowd burst into applause when they saw him walking to the stake.

*17:7 And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? 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."*

After all that John has seen here, he marvels at the vision before him. He understood that the woman represents One World religion and the beast is the Antichrist. His amazement was at how this is all going to fit together. Even though the angel says he will tell John the mystery of the woman and the beast, he concentrates on the beast. A mystery that Paul wrote about in Colossians 1:25-27 described as the "*the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations* which is the mystery of Christ and His Church. This is a mystery of godliness which is the opposite of this mystery of inequity from this woman. Throughout Revelation there are similar contrasts such as the difference between the godly trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost versus the evil trinity, Satan (the Dragon), the Antichrist (the Beast) and the False Prophet.

*17:8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come."*

The beast that you saw is the satanic, the last of the most powerful country ever. People will come to faith in Christ during this last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation. We know this because of the phrase "*whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*". The Antichrist's death will be a fake, nothing but smoke and mirrors. Up until this time, the beast and the false prophet, world religious system, will have ruled together. But now, the Beast will rule alone. He demands complete subjugation or submission by all. Verse 8 is NOT in chronological

order. We know this because the beast will have final destruction in Revelation 19. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”* This *“Man of Lawlessness”* is the Antichrist. Apostasy is the abandonment of religious beliefs or the turning away from God.

*17:9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,*

As hard as it is to believe, the phrase *“This calls for a mind of wisdom”* means that the Revelation is going to get even more difficult now. John MacArthur said, *“Perhaps only those alive at the time will fully comprehend it.”* Verse 9b talks about *“seven mountains on which the woman sits”*. The seven mountains are the 7 kings or kingdoms. (This is important because some versions incorrectly use the word *“hills”* in place of mountains. Based on the incorrect translation, some scholars then incorrectly say what the seven mountains are. Rome was built upon seven hills. Those who teach that the 7 hills represent Rome believe that Revelation has already been fulfilled and that the woman is the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther, John Knox, John Calvin, John Wesley, Thomas Cranmer and Charles Spurgeon all believed that the Antichrist would be a pope.

The Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)

*“The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ.”*

The angel’s call for discernment and wisdom nullifies the seven heads as being Rome because John would have realized it. This speculation is useless because the 7 mountains are identified as 7 kings.

*17:10 and 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.*

Five kingdoms have fallen. They most likely are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. Except for the addition of Assyria and Egypt, these kingdoms are the same as those seen in the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2. Egypt is one because Israel came from the exodus of the Hebrew nation. Assyria took Israel (the northern tribes) into captivity. The one that is, *“at the time”* that the visions are given is Rome. The one to come is the Antichrist’s One World Empire. China, Russia, the United States, etc. are not included on the list because none of them sought to control based on religion. The phrase *“he (the 7<sup>th</sup> ruler) must remain a little while”* means that he will rule for a short time.

*17:11 The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.*

Who then is this 8<sup>th</sup> ruler? It is the beast / Antichrist. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> rulers are both the Antichrist. This happens because the Antichrist dies and comes back to life. This is faked and accomplished with smoke and mirrors. The destruction of the Antichrist is fulfilled in Revelation 19:20 and 20:10.

*17:12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.*

These ten horns are ten kings which have not appeared. Many people believe this is the revised Roman Empire. These kingdoms are most likely the ten toes in Daniel's description of world empires (Daniel 2:41-43). We can be fairly certain based on Daniel 2:44. *"44 In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."* The ten toes were destroyed by one final kingdom that will last forever.

"The EEC (European Union) started in 1957 when six European nations met to talk about combining their nuclear, coal and economic resources. They met together in Rome and signed the Treaty of Rome – the beginnings of the present EEC. In the spiritual dynamic of things, it's no accident that on the back of the Eurodollar coin is a woman riding a multi-headed beast." David Guzik



*17:13 These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.*

*14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*

*15 And he \*said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.*

These kings, whoever they are, have one purpose, which is to give their power to the beast to overcome the Lamb. Three powerful demons from Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet will lead these kings. (Revelation 16:13-16). Jesus will win the cosmic battle. Jesus will return to fight this final battle in Revelation 19:11 *"11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war."* Who comes with Jesus? All the saints (believers) will join Jesus but they won't have to fight. So where do these saints have to be before this point? In Heaven, of course! This can only be true if they were previously raptured. The waters upon which the harlot sits is the nations of the world. This tells us that the woman at the beginning of this chapter that people will move to one religion.

*17:16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."*

Once again we are going back in time. These verses probably occur at the midway point of the Tribulation period. The kings and the Antichrist HATE the prostitute, the woman because he wants total worship. "This has always been the goal of tyrants – and most politicians – to use religion for their purposes, then discard it." – Guzik.

God is in control this entire time, pulling the puppet strings as it were. We know this because in verse 17, it says *"For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose."* These people can no longer think for themselves. They cannot be saved. We know because of verse 17 again, God is in control.

The Great City in verse 18 is Babylon. But who did we previously learn the great city was? Jerusalem. It is possible that the two places can be the same place.

Isaiah 1:20-21 *"But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken. 21 How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.*

Revelation 21:2 *"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."* For there to be a New Jerusalem, the old Jerusalem must be destroyed. So the Harlot riding on the beast is NOT Jerusalem.