

Revelation 17 “The Harlot and the Beast”

Revelation Chapter 16... The first plague is a saucer full of infection and inflammation. People on earth worship the beast with one hand and itch their running sores with their other.

The second bowl pollutes the ocean. The third bowl contaminates the drinking water.



THEY HAVE REFUSED THE LIVING WATER, AND NOW WILL BE GIVEN THE WATER OF DEATH.

The fourth bowl empowers the sun to singe the earth's sinners.

The plagues are irrefutable evidence that the only way to be delivered is to repent of sin, surrender to Yahweh, and seek his mercy.

It seems that God is going to show the rebels an awesome display of his unconquerable might to offer them a final opportunity to surrender. God is proving to humanity that there are two possibilities: repent of sin and worship God, or persist in rebellion and face unavoidable judgment.

★ Douglas Wilson has said that the two statements atheists make are: first, there is no God; and second, I hate him.

So the sun goes wrong in both directions – first it flashes out at people and burns them, and now in the fifth plague the “Lights go Out”.

Sixth Bowl: verse 12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up,

The seventh bowl ravages the earth. Verse 18 mentions an unprecedented earthquake. Mountains are leveled. Islands are erased. In verse 21 the wicked world gets pelted with 100 pound hailstones. Recall in the Old Testament, the penalty for blasphemy was stoning... In the end, God judges the blasphemers.

We might say that Revelation 16 is a "great" chapter.

It describes **GREAT** evil: a **GREAT** city, **GREAT** Babylon (Revelation 16:19). It describes **GREAT** tools of judgment: **GREAT** heat (Revelation 16:9), a **GREAT** river dried up (Revelation 16:12), a *great* earthquake (Revelation 16:18), *great* hail and *great* plagues (Revelation 16:21). It describes a **GREAT** God: His **GREAT** voice (*loud* is the same Greek word for *great*; verses 1; 17), and His **GREAT** day of victory (Revelation 16:14).

There is only one who is truly God. He mercifully shows that everything humans worship instead of him **is bankrupt**, and he does so to display his wealth, which he offers to all who will repent and trust in Jesus. But rather than surrender their rebellion, wicked humans respond to the terms he offers by cursing him and gathering to make war upon him.

ALWAYS GIVING US A CHOICE...

Unbelieving... Believing... unsaved... Saved... non-Christian... Christian... heathen... Saint... darkness... Light... no circumcision of heart... circumcised of heart... going to hell... Going to heaven... unrighteous... Righteous... Dead now ALIVE! Incomplete... Complete **PRAY!**

Let us stand together as we read aloud God's glorious word! Revelation Chapter 17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, **2** with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." **3** So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. **4** The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. **5** And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. **6** I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. **7** But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? 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. **8** The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. **9** "Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. **10** There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. **11** The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. **12** "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. **13** These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. **14** These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful." **15** Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. **16** And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. **17** For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. **18** And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

BABYLON Revelation 16:19 and 14:8 have already declared Babylon's Fall. In Revelation 17 and 18, the Fall of Babylon is carefully detailed.



BABYLON IS MENTIONED 287 TIMES IN THE SCRIPTURES, MORE THAN ANY OTHER CITY EXCEPT JERUSALEM.

Tenney notes, "Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River. **Genesis 11:1-10** shows that right after the flood, Babylon "was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God." He goes on to say, "Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. "Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God's people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed."



To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name *Babylon* is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God's people.

The concept of Babylon is greater than Revelation 17-18 and the Antichrist's reign. Babylon was present in John's day (typified by Rome), in our day, and throughout history, as the "world system." But under the Antichrist, Babylon (in both its religious and commercial aspects) will hold sway over the earth as never before.

The seven bowls of God's wrath in chapter 16 took us to the end of history, with the capital city of the rebellious nations, Babylon, being split into three parts from an earthquake that causes the nations to fall (16:19).


Chapter 17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot **"harlot" four times in this chapter. (Babylon will fall)** "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, **Worldly, wicked systems of this world are everywhere!** So John sees the ruling city of the world personified as a human female who is a prostitute, and the world under her control is personified as waters on which she sits.

The whole world should relate to God as a wife does to her husband, in pure devotion. But the world has forgotten God, betrayed him, and sold herself to anyone who will pay.

2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." **Religious Babylon intoxicates kings and peoples. Karl Marx was partly right when he said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." He was partly right because empty religion is the opium of the masses. We should be as emotionally dismayed by the way the world is as we would be to behold a woman who had been so degraded as to prostitute herself.**

The world's rulers have gone to the great prostitute by pursuing their own glory, their own name, their own purposes, all the while ignoring God's law, God's glory, and God's purposes. They live in a godless stupor, blind to God's claims on them, staggering about in stupid self-importance, like drunks who think themselves funny and smart but are only witless and uninhibited because they're inebriated.

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. **the desolate nature of the wilderness is an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment.** And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast **The harlot rides the same beast (seven heads and ten horns) that was previously seen in Revelation 13:1 - the Antichrist and his dictatorship.** which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

 Guzik adds, "Her association with blasphemy and the dragon's beast are clearly seen from God's perspective. But to the people of the earth she will look quite religious, and have the "faith" everybody wants."

4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

The woman is clothed with emblems of luxury (**purple ... gold and precious stones**) and government (**scarlet**). Yet she offers idolatry (**abominations**) and impurity (**filthiness of her**

fornication) in this sumptuous setting.

If you disregard God and live for the world, you may look nice for a little while, but it will not last. Sin is fun for a season!

Only God can provide lasting satisfaction, lasting significance, lasting beauty, and lasting pleasure. That “golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality” will ruin your life. **DO NOT DRINK IT. IT’S POISON!**

5 And on her forehead a name was written: **Roman prostitutes frequently wore a headband with their name engraved upon it.**

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. **THIS TITLE IS NOT FOR LITERAL BABYLON; BUT ITS SPIRITUAL (MYSTERY) REPRESENTATION**

This harlot must be larger than any one branch of a religious institution. She is the embodiment of Satan's own ecumenical movement - the religion of the world system.

Our world, with its "it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe" philosophy, is ripe for the harlots seductions. We see the casual disregard for the truth crippling the church today.

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.



We need to be convinced that it is better to live for the Lamb than for the beast, with the pure bride than with the nasty whore, for eternal things rather than the temporary, to please God and not enrage him, to enter his city rather than being thrown into the lake of fire.

As Hughes points out, “The use of the same language at the beginning of the sections on the foul harlot and the pure bride indicates that the two are to be contrasted with each other. The world is a whore. The church is the bride of Christ. **For which do you want to live?**”

THE MAE WEST OF THE BIBLE

Mae West was one of Hollywood's naughty girls. **(August 17, 1893 – November 22, 1980)**

It was said “**she climbed the ladder of success – wrong by wrong.**” Here are a few quotes from Mae: “**I use to be Snow White... but I drifted.**” “**Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution yet.**” “**I only like two kinds of men – domestic and foreign.**” And finally, “**I've been in more laps than a napkin.**” Mae West was a woman who became a star by being a slut.

[The Britney Spears... Lindsay Lohan... Miley Cyrus... Kim Kardashian... Paris Hilton of our day.](#)

Well, in Revelation 17 we find the Mae West of the Bible – a biblical bad girl - a spiritual slut - a decadent, immoral, unfaithful woman. In verse 5 she receives the very unflattering name, **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

“The whore of Babylon” is the false religious system the Antichrist uses to gain ecclesiastical sanction for his rise to power. In the Great Tribulation this naughty girl will be the spiritual system that deceives the world into

worshipping Satan. In the words of Mae West, the whore of Babylon will say to the world, “*Come up and see me sometime.*” And sadly, the world will accept her invitation.

The harlot of Babylon will include the institutional church once the true church has been raptured. **It'll incorporate the occult, astrology, humanism, paganism - as well as, all the world religions - into one eclectic doctrine - a universal religion.**

Its only creed is, “Believe in anything but Jesus”. It's tolerant of all ideas, but true, biblical Christianity... **WE ARE THERE!**

This Babylonian belief system has been around since Nimrod. When the Persians conquered Babylon its priests fled to Asia - and later to Rome. The Roman Catholic church has incorporated many of its pagan practices.

Sadly, evangelical churches today are also sanctifying sorcery... Positive confession, visualization... any attempt to manipulate reality through psychic gymnastics is forbidden by God. It's called the New Age - but it's an old lie. **Embracing homosexuality, abortion... forsaking God and His glorious word claiming His will.**

John tells us the spiritual status of the whore in verse 6

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Amazed... the persecution was coming from the “Church”.

We should never forget that some of the most vicious persecution conducted against true Christians has been done in the name of the church.

In the days when the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ruled England (known as “Bloody Mary” for good reason), 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 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. This barbarity was committed in the name of religion, in the name of the church. But 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.

Listen to these insights from Hamilton... “Before we go on to the angel’s explanation of what John saw, note the way prostitution defiles and degrades people. That is what disregarding God does to us. That is what selling ourselves for the world’s “stuff” instead of trusting God and keeping ourselves chaste for him does to us. Believers in Jesus are the bride of Christ. Let us not whore ourselves out for the world’s passing pleasures, adornments, and commendations. Live for the Lamb and his pure bride, not for the beast and his whore. Live for the church and for Jesus, not for the world and its God-dishonoring rulers.”

7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? 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. Quoting Sandy Adams... **WHY A HARLOT CAN'T TRUST A BEAST**

In 17:8 John sees a beast "that was, and is not, and yet is" - this is the revived Roman empire. She rises in the last days in the form of a 10 nation confederacy headquartered in the capitol of Rome. Verse 9 further identifies this beast with "seven mountains" - Rome is known to this day "as the city on seven hills."

It's interesting, that today, for the first time since 400 AD the old Roman empire has once again come together. It's reassembled in the form of a united Europe.

I'll never forget a December 1991 Time Magazine cover story on the European Community that contained a symbol of Europe... a woman riding on a beast. It was as if the editors lifted their imagery right out of Revelation 17.

In 17:7 John implies the harlot will come to power on the back of a revived Rome. But here's the lesson she learns - go to bed with the devil and you'll never wake up.

That's what happens to the harlot. The political leader, the Antichrist, uses this false religion to come to power, but afterwards he turns on the harlot.

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. **Just as the beast faked the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus back in 13:3 when one of its heads had a mortal wound and was healed, so now it seems that the beast will imitate Jesus in another way. Jesus came to earth, and he has gone away, and he will come again.**

9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. **They are seven mountains. This identifies the beast with the seven hills on which Rome was built.**

10 There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. This seventh will quickly be taken over by an eighth - and will become the state of the Antichrist (Revelation 17:11). **11** The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. **Perdition means "destruction," and the beast will be destroyed.**

Difficult passage to interpret... many different ideas on this one.

My opinion... - Five have fallen refers to the five world empires before John's day: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greece

- One is refers to the world empire of John's day: Rome

- The other has not yet come refers to the one world empire to come: a revival of the Roman Empire

This plainly is a difficult passage!



(REV 17:11) THE BEAST (THE ANTICHRIST) IS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS THE EIGHTH KING.

12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive

authority for one hour as kings with the beast. [This probably alludes to a ten-nation confederation \(as in the toes of the Daniel 2:24-45 image\),](#)

Many have seen the European Economic Community as the potential fulfillment of this. Perhaps, but now there are more than ten nations in this revived European power, and more on the way.

13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. *Whatever their exact identity, their actions are clear. They ally with the Antichrist in the war against Christ, in the battle alluded to in the sixth and seventh bowls (Revelation 16:12-21).*



The harlot presides over peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. This tells us that the harlot's influence is worldwide, through her connection to the beast. This will be a truly one-world religion.

14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." **15** Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. **16** And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. Verse 16 says she becomes "desolate and naked". The Antichrist requires the world to worship him. In the end he becomes jealous of any type of religion. **The harlot is destroyed by her customers. The world self-destructs because evil is self-defeating.**

Once his power has been consolidated, the Antichrist no longer needs the help of religious Babylon. He will then work to dismantle and destroy her and her one-world religion.

This has always been the goal of tyrants - and most politicians - to use religion for their purposes, then discard it.

17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, [God has directed the judgment against religious Babylon. God will sometimes use a wicked group \(here, the ten kings\) to be an instrument of His judgment against another wicked group \(here, religious Babylon\).](#) to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the **WORDS OF GOD ARE FULFILLED**. **18** And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

"THE WORDS OF GOD" BEING "FULFILLED." We get our understanding of the Bible from verses like this. God will fulfill every promise he has made.

A red-light district is a part of an urban area where a concentration of prostitution and sex-oriented businesses, such as sex shops, strip clubs, adult theaters, etc. are found. Areas in many big cities around the world have acquired an international reputation as red-light districts.



The term red-light district originates from the red lights that were used as signs of brothels.

Hamilton gives us a great thought to leave Chapter 17... Think with me about his image of the world as a prostitute. Men go to prostitutes to pay to have a "husband and wife" kind of experience, but no amount of money buys the true joys of marriage.

Those who go to prostitutes may purchase a physical pleasure, but it is stripped of all the relational and emotional richness that is only to be found in marriage.

Now think about how John uses the image. Unbelievers are trying to purchase from the world system what God offers for free, if they will commit to a relationship to him.

GO TO GOD TO HAVE YOUR NEEDS MET, NOT THE WORLD'S SPIRITUAL RED-LIGHT DISTRICT.