

Evil Vs. Evil Revelation 17:3 – 18

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In Satan's economy of the last days, all of his followers are expendable. There is no loyalty at all, even among the principalities and powers, those fallen divine beings who are in it for themselves and have locked their future up with that of Satan, who convinced them to rebel in the first place.

We have seen that throughout history with the constant warfare and god of this country battling the god of that country using the bodies of those who had aligned with them as cannon fodder.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ caught them all off guard and as a result they had to change their approach.

We have seen that, historically, with the rise of more monolithically oriented religious systems and a move away from the separate gods we saw in the middle east and elsewhere beforehand.

As the word of Jesus Christ spread, the hegemony that these fallen divine beings had developed became threatened and they turned to new methods to retain loyal followers in the physical realm as well as continue on their mission to take as many humans to hell with them as they could.

Thus we see infiltration become a method, become part of and corrupt from the inside. And now we arrive at the final stage.

Revelation 17:3–6

“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 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, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” 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.” (NASB95)

After being given the invitation and an advance description of what he would see if he goes with the angel, John goes and is carried away in the Spirit. This is the same term as used earlier in the book in chapter 1. The angel takes him to a wilderness. We are not told which one or anywhere specific. Now John can clearly see, nothing is blocking his vision of what he has been told he would see. He describes what he sees in detail. One of the things he sees he has seen before, now he adds color to the description. The scarlet beast he sees is the same beast he saw back in Revelation 13:1.

Revelation 13:1

“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.” (NASB95)

Now we know the color of the beast out of the sea, scarlet. The woman is now riding this beast.

Many people find the connection between religious Babylon and Roman Catholicism irresistible, yet it is flawed in the sense that there is no doubt that religious Babylon will incorporate a strong Roman Catholic element, but it will be much bigger than Roman Catholicism. (Guzik 2013, Re 17:9)

Revelation 17:3–5

“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 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, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”” (NASB95)

We have already discussed this beast earlier. There is a relationship with the beast, the false religion has added, as we discussed, cohesion back to a confused world.

From shortly after the rapture up to the middle of the Tribulation, this false religious system has been all the rage and it has been actively, systematically and ritually eliminating those who are not followers of this false religion.

Revelation 6:9–11

“When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.” (NASB95)

But all good things come to an end and this false religious system will tumble when the Beast from the Sea has no need for it anymore as he will be personally enabled by the dragon.

Revelation 14:8

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” (NASB95)

Immediately after that pronouncement was the pronouncement about those who will worship the beast, his image and take his mark.

This beast is scarlet. Scarlet = sin

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: **though your sins are like scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” (ESV)

Some will say the seven heads = seven consecutive world empires, or is it the seven nations at the end with three controlled by the beast? Thus the ten horns. We only have to look Revelation 17:10 for the answer.

Names of blasphemy are on the body this time unlike in 13:1 when they were on each head. The ten horns are the ten nations that make up the Beast's Kingdom. The angel explained some of this to John.

Revelation 17:6

“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.” (NASB95)

The angel responds to John's facial expressions when he sees this woman on the beast and explains some of it to him.

The word used for “wondered greatly” is the Greek word θαυμάζω (thaumazo). To be extraordinarily impressed or disturbed by something. Wonder, marvel, be astonished (the context determines whether in a good or bad sense) (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000, 444)

Nothing is said by John or by the angel. This is one of those intriguing places in the scriptures where non-verbal communication comes across in the text.

John sees and takes in the image of the woman on the beast, and his face and body language betrays what is going on in his mind. As a result, the angel, seeing and understanding the non-verbal cues from John, asks John why he is disturbed by this. To help John get it, the angel then begins to provide some explanation.

There is a mystery here, but only one mystery, the woman and the beast are heavily linked.

This woman, this picture of the apostate tribulation “church,” being drunk with the blood of the saints shows us what the source of all the martyrs who are under the altar at the 5th seal is.

The history of the church has demonstrated that apostate Christendom is unsparing in its persecution of those who attempt to maintain a true faith in Jesus Christ. What has been true in the past will be brought to its ultimate in this future time when the martyrs will be beyond number from every kindred, tongue, and nation. The blood shed by the apostate church is exceeded only by that of the martyrs who refuse to worship the beast in the great tribulation. (Walvoord 2008, 248-249)

Revelation 17:7–13

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. **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. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, 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. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. 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 have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.” (NASB95)

Got it?

Clearly, this section of scriptures points to the fact that there also appears to have been a meeting between the Beast and the Dragon.

Revelation 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.” (NASB95)

While in his between life and death state, the Beast appears to have experienced an NDE (Near Death Experience) except he does not go into the light, instead, he is offered the same deal from the Dragon that Jesus was offered, and unlike Jesus, he says yes.

The designation of the beast as the one who “was and is not, and is about to ascend out of the abyss” ties him to the beast with the death-wound who was healed in 13:3, 12, 14. (Thomas 1995, 292)

So it is clear, thanks to angelic feedback, that this is the same person as the Beast from the sea and is the same person who has the deadly wound and then recovers resulting in worship shifting from this false religious system over directly to him. He will insist on it and the False Prophet, who may have been the leader of this religious organization, will stand alongside him.

Revelation 17:9

“Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,” (NASB95)

Yes, many have stopped here and come out with the pronouncement that this is obviously Rome. That may be the case. Mecca is on seven hills too. But in the Old Testament, mountain = kingdom

Daniel 2:35

“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. **But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain** and filled the whole earth.” (ESV)

Isaiah 2:2

“It shall come to pass in the latter days that **the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains**, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,” (ESV)

Jeremiah 51:25

“Look, I’m against you, destroying mountain, who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD. “I’ll stretch out my hand against you and roll you down from the crags. And I’ll make you a burned-out mountain.” (ISV)

This repeats the call for wisdom in 13:18 (regarding the number of the beast) and has the same meaning (see on that verse). In both places divinely given wisdom is needed to solve the apocalyptic riddle. (Osborne 2002, 617)

Therefore, the symbolism of the seven hills points to world powers that have their place in history. The woman sits not on literal hills but positions herself above world empires to direct them against God’s kingdom. Throughout the ages, she has been trying to overthrow the city of God but has failed to conquer it. (Kistemaker and Hendrikson 1953-2001, 471)

A close study of the passage does not support the conclusion that this refers to the city of Rome. Seiss, for instance, offers extensive evidence that the reference is to rulers rather than to physical mountains

(The Apocalypse, pp. 391–94). This is supported by the text which explains, They are also seven kings (lit., “the seven heads are seven kings”). (Walvoord, Revelation 1985, 971)

Revelation 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.” (NASB95)

The seven mountains are seven kings, but which kingdoms?

When we first saw this idea of consecutive gentile kingdoms, it was with the statue that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about and Daniel interpreted meaning to back in Daniel 2.

Those kingdoms may be part of this number, then again, maybe not.

The Seven Heads

The angel also explains a bit about the seven heads in verse 10 and tells us they are actual kingdoms here on the earth. The explanation seems to also inform us about the powers behind the thrones throughout history. We discovered, when we looked at the unseen realm, that as a result of the rebellion at Babel in Genesis 11, God subdivided the nations into 70 language groups from the one language group that previously existed. Since man was not interested in doing what YAHWEH wanted, He assigned divine beings to oversee each of those nations.

Deuteronomy 32:8–9

“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided up humankind, he set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the heavenly assembly. For the LORD’s allotment is his people, Jacob is his special possession.” (NET)

Those divine beings though began to demand worship themselves from the people they were supposed to be shepherding resulting in the condemnation from God in Psalm 82.

Psalm 82:6–7

“I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”” (ESV)

These same fallen divine beings are still operating as motivators of the nations today and **they are personally behind all false religion we see** (Isaiah 41:20 – 29).

In some cases, they operate on their own, in other cases, aligned with others.

Daniel 10:20

“Then he said, ‘Do you understand why I came to you? Soon I’ll return to fight the prince of Persia. I’m going forth to war—and take note—the prince of Greece is coming.’” (ISV)

A review of Scripture indicates that, in fact, five great empires threatened the survival of God’s Old Testament people Israel. (Easley 1998, 310)

About the Seven Heads

When John was writing this, the **known Biblical world** Kingdom list looked like this:

Egypt
Assyria
Babylon
Medo-Persia
Greece
Rome

Revelation 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.” (NASB95)

But wait a minute, there are other kingdoms that were problems for Israel that would wind up being excluded.

In this category could also be placed such kingdoms as Syria, Edom, Moab, Midian, and many others, but none of these were empires of great size and influence. On the other hand, there were other great and powerful empires in the ancient world—China, India, and the Incas, for example—but these had only peripheral contact with the Word of God and the chosen people. (Morris 1983, 337)

Since the angel makes the reference to “one is” corresponding to the time of John, we can infer he is talking about the Roman Empire. One down.

If we accept the five we previously discussed, then we could be there, but it is hard to be dogmatic about the Kingdoms 1-5, the one is we know is Rome, the 7th is the first iteration of the Kingdom of the Beast and the scriptures say he is also the 8th.

At the very least, the description is emblematic of the world system being overseen by the fallen divine beings.

The kings represent worldly states or kingdoms; seven, again, betokens universality. We are thus told that this world-power on which the woman relies is exhibited in the manifestation of power by successive nations, e.g. Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, etc., as many as have ever existed or shall exist; for this is the meaning of seven. (Spence-Jones 1909, 417)

Revelation 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.” (NASB95)

That last kingdom being discussed by the angel in verse 10 is the kingdom of the Beast, as of his recovery from the near fatal wound, and his resulting alignment with the Dragon in the final world government of the Beast.

...the beast himself consists of, and is formed by, what has been denoted by the seven kings. We have already interpreted the beast as the worldly power—Satan in his capacity of “prince of this world.” We have also shown that the “seven kings” describes this worldly power as it exists throughout all ages. (Spence-Jones 1909, 417)

Revelation 17:12–13

“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 have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.” (NASB95)

The ten horns explanation falls in line with the previous explanation of the ten horns of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. These are the ten nations, 3 of which wind up being ruled directly by the Beast, that are his final world kingdom structure.

The beast will give them their authority, but God will permit him to do so. The single purpose of these end-time kingdoms is to rule the world. The 10 rulers will submit to the Antichrist's leadership to achieve this end. (Constable 2003, Re 17:12-13)

Revelation 17:14

“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.” (NASB95)

Verse 14 removes all doubt for us as to who these last ten horns, kingdoms, are. Their true motivations are also revealed. These are those who will be gathered together at the end of the age to solve the Jew and Believer problem once and for all, but Jesus Christ arrives, and they redirect their military operations to combat the King of Kings.

Recall that this final army will be heavily genetically modified as well as demonic in perspective.

Revelation 12:17

“So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (NASB95)

We move from a statement of intent that has its basis of origin in the original rebellion of Genesis 3. This was closely followed by a declaration of war from YAHWEH.

At this point, since being cast out of all but the area around earth, the Dragon and his minions are gathering together all they have influenced, all of the earth dwellers, to wipe out the Jews and to take over Mt Zion. It will not end well for them or their followers.

Daniel 7:21–22

“As I continued to watch, that same horn waged war against the saints, and was prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days arrived to pass judgment in favor of the saints of the Highest One and the time came for the saints to take possession of the kingdom.” (ISV)

Did you see who it is that the Dragon will have influenced all of the nations of the world to make war on? Not just the Lamb, but also “those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

“The called” - “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks**, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:22–24, ESV)

“The chosen” - “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father - is well pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32, NET)

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. For he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight in love.” (Ephesians 1:3–4, NET)

“The faithful” - “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, NET)

This is a description of the church of Jesus Christ. We are part of His invasion army and as such, subject to attack by the Dragon, something all of us have experience with already.

The three terms become progressively more specific. Those chosen for salvation are elected by the Father (cf. Eph. 1:4–5). They are the same ones who then respond to God’s grace by faithfully believing on Him. (Constable 2003, Re 17:14)

Revelation 17:15

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” (NASB95)

We have already discussed this. The false religion that will arise as a result of the rapture is worldwide in scope and will indeed take in all existing false faiths to include earth-based religions, Islam, dead orthodoxy, dead churches, Islam, and the cults. It will have a strong bent towards the same religion that advocates beheading those who refuse to become followers.

Revelation 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.” (NASB95)

We do not know how long the interval is between the rapture of the church and the kickoff of the tribulation. It is during that time period that the apostate church develops” the lie” and pushes it out. There will be millions who come to Christ during the same time period as they make sense out of what happened by turning to the scriptures as well as to resources which have been left behind. I suspect there will be many a newly saved pastor preaching their first time ever evangelistic message the following Sunday.

At a point in time, most likely around the midpoint of the tribulation, just prior to rolling into the Temple and declaring himself to be god, all of the nations as one, turn on this apostate church. Either they have finally tired of the deference they are having to show, or they feel that politically, this religious institution is now a liability. In light of the near fatal injury of the beast, I can easily see where the novelty has worn off.

Having used the false religious system to help him gain control of the world, Antichrist will discard it. He will want the world to worship only him. He will turn on the harlot and will make her “desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.” That graphic language of extreme violence is used to make clear that Antichrist and his henchmen will completely obliterate the false religious system. (MacArthur 2007, 269-270)

So what is the real reason for the shift away from this religious organization?

Revelation 17:17

“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.” (NASB95)

At the point this takes place, the earth dwellers and the world leaders will all believe that they are the ones calling the shots with no external intervention taking place at all. Really. How do they even come up with that idea?

After being tortured for 5 months by demons and then seeing over a billion people killed by a demon army, how does one even come up with the idea of self-determination? There have been wars, judgements, cosmic events earth dwellers could not control, a couple of guys causing all kind of trouble around the temple not to mention 144,000 very vocal and protected evangelists talking about Jesus 24/7.

The spirit of that age is trying to push into ours today. Case in point one of the political parties in the United States recently affirmed that they recognize the “ethical soundness” and “importance” of religiously unaffiliated Americans. In other words, this party is no longer interested in people who are religiously affiliated. Jesus Christ is being or is pushed off to the side and those of us who believe and follow Him are being categorized as extremists.

Suddenly, the world looks very different. Remember the enemy who is operating in the background.

The immediate cause of the devastating friction among former allies is unknown, but the ultimate cause is known. God has put into the hearts and minds of the ten kings and their leader to turn against the religious structure which they feel no longer serves a useful purpose for them. (Thomas 1995, 305)

Revelation 17:18

“The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” (NASB95)

Now we find out who the woman is, the one who is riding the beast. The woman is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

What great city are we talking about?

Every great center of power that has prostituted its wealth and influence restores to life the spirit of ancient Babylon. John’s words extend beyond his immediate setting in history and sketch the portrait of an eschatological Babylon, which will provide the social, religious, and political base for the last attempt of Antichrist to establish his kingdom. (Mounce 1997, 321)

The context of the literary unit suggests an anti-God power structure symbolized as a city. Which city is not the issue; the point is the existence of a governmental system totally apart from God, humans attempting to meet all of their own needs (atheistic humanism). (Utley 2001, 121)

Some say the great city is Rome, others, the religious capital of this giant merger church. This would also open Mecca as the great city. It is not Jerusalem. Looking at this from the perspective of John though Rome would be the better candidate for the city in question.

Babel was the source of false religion, throughout the scriptures the battle has been between the city of man, Babylon, and the city of God, Jerusalem. Under guidance from fallen divine beings, man created false religious systems beginning there in Babel and extending from there. What is seen here is the final elimination of this false religious system, disguised under numerous names, throughout the ages in favor of what Satan had been looking for all along, and disguised as his false trinity. He wants to be worshiped with no intermediaries.

What we have seen here in chapter 17 is the detail of what was originally related to us by another angel right after the introduction of the false trinity.

Revelation 14:8

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” (NASB95)

We have seen the detail behind the elimination of what Satan has been pointing to with false religion all of these years – he has desired the worship himself.

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