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**A0619 – May 7, 2006 – Rev 17:6-18 – The Judgment Of The Babylonian System Of Religion**

In this vision there are three entities that we have to keep in mind so we don't get confused.

- the harlot/woman who is the city of Babylon which serves as the central headquarters of the Babylonian System of Religion which began at Babel
- the scarlet beast who is the Antichrist (13:1, 17:7; et. al.)
- the waters who are the nations (17:15)

**Revelation 17:6 And I saw the woman drinking from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.**

**And seeing her, I marveled [with] great amazement.**

The shedding of **the blood of saints** is a part of the history of the Babylonian system of religion. Whenever this false religion is about to be exposed or people try to correct it they are murdered. Typically these are **saints, witnesses of Jesus**. They have shed so much of their blood they have become **drunk**. This is why God gave them **blood to drink** under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bowl.

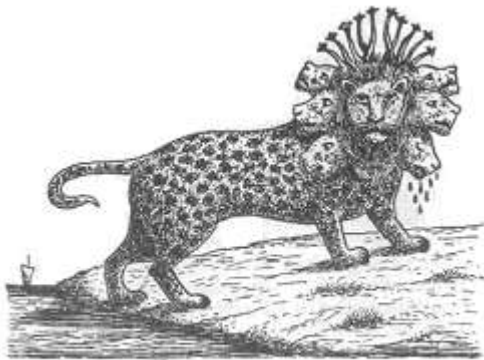
**Revelation 16:5-6** "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; <sup>6</sup>for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

**And seeing her, John marveled with great amazement** (literally John "marveled with a great marvel"). This spectacle is astonishing. We are not told why he **marveled** but likely verse 7 is indicating that he **marveled** because he did not understand **the mystery of the woman and the beast carrying her**.

**Revelation 17:7 And the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast carrying her, having seven heads and ten horns."**

**And the angel said to John, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast carrying her, having seven heads and ten horns.** And so, when the angel explains this it will cure John's spell of amazement. And so, the angel will give the interpretation, and though this is a difficult vision the mind which has wisdom can understand it (Rev 17:9). One of the big difficulties for people is confusing what the angel says about **the woman** with what the angel says about **the beast** and so we will try to keep these two distinct. Remember, **the woman** is the Babylonian system of religion and **the beast** is the Antichrist who is described here as **having seven heads and ten horns**, just like in chapter 13:1.

Before we study the interpretation note that this verse provides some significant new information, the **beast is carrying** the woman. In verse 3 the woman is sitting on the beast. So, there is an interplay, a temporary symbiosis between the Antichrist and the Babylonian system of religion in the Tribulation. While the Babylonian religion controls the Antichrist with her corrupting influence the Antichrist carries the false religion and its followers along with him in order to ultimately put them under his political and economic dominion. Once he has accomplished this he will no longer need the woman and will buck her off (17:16), making himself the central object of worship (2 Thess 2; Rev 13).



JOHN'S BEAST

Note that the **beast** has **seven heads and ten horns** and that this description is identical to his description in chapter 13:1. So, these are one and the same and I want to leave the interpretation of the **seven heads and ten horns** to verses 9-12 so let's move on to verse 8.

## THE BEAST (17:8-17)

**Revelation 17:8** The beast which you saw was and is not and is destined to come up out of the abyss and he goes to utter destruction (*apoleia* - destined for hell), and those who dwell upon the earth will marvel, who do not have their name written (perfect passive) in the book of life from beginning of the world, seeing the beast, that he was (imperfect active) and is not (present active) and will be (future middle).

The description of the beast who **was and is not and is about to come up** is a counterfeit of the eternal description as the one who was and is and is to come found frequently in Revelation and it refers here to the apparent death of the Antichrist.

**Revelation 13:3** *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast;

He was alive and then he was not and then he comes up, an apparent but counterfeit resurrection. I take it that the Antichrist basically has two careers, a human career before his fatal wound and a superhuman career after his fatal wound. During his human career he is a ruler of peace, but during his superhuman career he is a ruler of persecution. Since his fatal wound will occur around the middle of the tribulation then this is when he will **come up out of the abyss** as is stated here. This same figure is used in Rev 11:7 and is parallel to his origin out of the “sea” in Rev 13:1, both refer to the source of terrible demonic beings (cf Rev 9:1 and many OT passages related to the “sea”). So, his superhuman career after his counterfeit resurrection will be characterized by extreme demonic influence, particularly from Satan. And here we are given his final destiny when the angel says **he goes to utter destruction**. The word here, *apoleia*, usually refers to hell and here it refers specifically to the lake of fire which he enters in Rev 19:20. And what will the earth dwellers response be to the final defeat of the Antichrist? **they will marvel**. They will find it hard to believe that such a great ruler, so fierce, even overcoming a death wound could be so easily defeated. Now, this is similar to the response in Isa 14. Many of you recall that Isa 14:12-14 speaks of the fall of Satan but there is also some revelation in this chapter that likely speaks of the Antichrist’s final defeat and how the kings of the earth will marvel that such a man who shook kingdoms could be defeated. Go back this afternoon and read Isa 14 beginning in verse 1 and read to verse 27 and remember that Isa 13, the previous chapter speaks of Babylon and some of the verses in chapter 13 have not been fulfilled, they are eschatological and this is significant because Rev 17-18 is all about Babylon future. Just go back and read it and I think you’ll find that this is an account of what immediately takes place after the Antichrist is killed, he will go

to Sheol and all the kings and past leaders will marvel that he has been defeated and then he will be resurrected and cast alive into the lake of fire for the 1,000 years. It's also in Isa 14 that many commentators are beginning to say that the Antichrist will be an Assyrian.

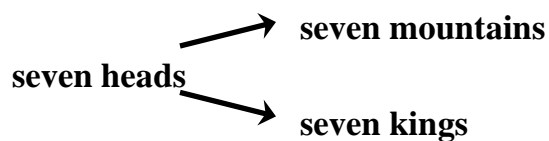
So, the **earth dwellers will marvel** at his **utter destruction** for they said in Rev 13:4 "who can wage war with the beast?" But it's quite clear that the Lamb can wage war with him quite easily. Of course, the only one's who can **marvel** at the beasts destruction are those who **do not have their name in the book of life**.

**Revelation 17:9 Here is the mind having wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, upon which the woman sits. And they are seven kings;**

**Revelation 17:10 five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain a little while.**

**Revelation 17:11 And the beast which was and is not, even he is an eighth and is from the seven, and he goes to utter destruction.**

Now, here the angel depicts this vision as difficult to understand by saying **Here is the mind having wisdom**. So, it's going to require a **mind having wisdom** to grasp the full meaning of **the seven heads**. To grasp this, remember that the angel is interpreting **the beast** and not the woman and it's really quite simple if you just keep this in mind. We are describing the beast. He has **seven heads** and they are **seven mountains upon which the woman sits**. So, now we have a full picture. **the woman sits** upon the beasts but not on his back, she sits on top of the **seven mountains**. And then the angel identifies the **seven mountains** as **seven kings**. So, the bottom line is that **the seven heads** are **seven kings** but the reference to **seven mountains** is also important. So, what this verse is showing is that **the seven heads** have a dual meaning. This is rare if not an impossible hermeneutical principle but the text seems to justify seeing the fact that that **the seven heads** have two meanings.



First, they are **seven mountains** and second **they are seven kings**. **seven kings** is quite clear but **seven mountains** need some explanation. I think the **seven mountains** refer to

**seven** kingdoms or empires during which the **seven kings** rule and that these kings and kingdoms come in sequence as described in verse 10.

**five** [kings] **have fallen, one is, the other has yet to come.** I take it the reference point is when John wrote the book in 96AD. Therefore, since John wrote during the Roman Empire under Emperor Domitian then the **one** who **is** must refer to Rome. There have been a myriad of interpretations of these kings, most of them try to limit them to the Emperors of Rome but none of them work without dodging some big problems. If you want to know what those are then you'll have to write me a question and I'll answer it next week because I don't want to get into all that unless you really want to know. I take it that the **seven kings** rule over seven Gentile kingdoms but I won't be able to identify each of the **seven kings** by name, except for probably Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, and Domitian. So, what we have are seven kings with seven kingdoms, only one of which is Rome.

The **five** who **have fallen** in John's day were,

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medo-Persia
5. Greece

The **one** who **is** in John's day was,

6. Rome

The **other** who **has yet to come** is

7. the final kingdom

And that makes the whole seven. Verse 10 notes that **when he comes** [the last king] **he must remain a little while.** So, the last king and his kingdom will be very short lived in comparison to the previous six. We know from Revelation it will only last for 3 ½ years with Antichrist as king. So, I take it that the Antichrist is a lot like Alexander the Great in this respect who conquered a vast area in a short period of time but then went to destruction. And remember, **the woman** is riding upon these kingdoms, so the false religion that began at Babel had infiltrated all these kingdoms and exacted some measure of control over them. She used them as stepping stones to propagate her seed through

time at each stage increasing the area of her influence until it will cover the whole earth in the final kingdom ruled by Antichrist.

Things can get a bit confusing in verse 11 if we're not careful. **And the beast which was and is not, even he is an eighth and is from the seven, and he goes to utter destruction.** So, the Antichrist, who is the seventh king of the final kingdom is also an **eighth**. This is difficult to understand but what we have here is the fact that the final kingdom in the future will have two phases. During the first phase it will be corrupt and Antichrist will be a power player during this phase which basically lasts until the middle of the Tribulation when he receives a fatal wound. Then he will counterfeit the resurrection and enter the second phase of this kingdom when he becomes world dictator. It is at that point that he becomes **an eighth**. The kingdom is the same but the character of the kingdom changes at that point. While it was corrupt during the first half, when the Antichrist takes the reigns he will institute a reign of terror on a whole new level for the second half of the Tribulation. So, he is both the seventh and an eighth. But, this verse repeats his final demise of **utter destruction** which refers to the lake of fire (19:20).

**Revelation 17:12 And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have not yet taken a kingdom, but they take authority as kings with the beast for one hour.**

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

**Revelation 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings and the called and chosen and faithful are with Him [having overcome them],**

Now for the **ten horns**. The angel identifies them as **ten kings which have not yet taken a kingdom**. So, these **ten kings** are all future from John's day. Daniel 7:7, 24 places all **ten kings** and the Antichrist as ruling during the latter days just before God's kingdom (cf Dan 7:27). It appears from Daniel that the **ten kings** will be united in a confederacy and then the Antichrist will rise to power and together they will share **authority as kings with the beast**. But they only share authority with **the beast for one hour**, that is, a very short time, much shorter than the Antichrist's reign of 3 ½ years (cf Rev 18:10). Once the Antichrist reaches world power he will not permit them to share power for long and so, verse 13 describes this, saying, **These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast** (cf Rev 17:17). In terms of the operation, things will run much more efficiently with one ruler and so, since they all **have one purpose...they give their power and authority to the beast**. The **one purpose** (also see Rev 17:17)? To **make war with the Lamb**, ultimately this refers to the final campaign of Armageddon

during which many battles will be fought, the decisive one's in the valley of Jehoshaphat which runs north to south on the east side of Jerusalem (cf Joel 3:2). And the decisive outcome? **the Lamb will overcome them**. Why? **for He is Lord of lords and King of kings** (cf Rev 19:16). The world's armies are no contest for **the Lamb**. These two titles express His sovereign rule and majesty and dominion. And when the **Lamb** returns to win this great victory He will not be alone. With Him will be **the called and chosen and faithful** who have also overcome the beast and His system. This, of course, refers to the bride of Christ, the Church who is seen returning with Christ in Rev 19 (also see the promise to the overcomers in Rev 2:26-27).

**Revelation 17:15 And he says to me, "The waters which you saw where the prostitute sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.**

**Revelation 17:16 And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make (future active) her desolating (perfect passive) and naked and they will eat (future middle) her flesh and will burn her down with fire.**

**Revelation 17:17 For God has put into their hearts to do His purpose and to do one purpose and to give their rule to the beast until the words of God will be completed.**

**Revelation 17:18 And the woman which you saw is the great city having rule over the kings of the earth.**

Verse 15 is a little interjectory note interpreting **the waters where the harlot sits** and brings us back to verse 1 which is the main idea of the chapter "**Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,**" So, the main idea of this chapter is **the judgment of the great harlot** which is the Babylonian religious system. So, false religion will be judged. Now, **the waters where the harlot sits** are interpreted for us as **peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues**. So, this shows how far the influence of Babylonian religion has spread and that this religion is holding the entire world captive at this time. It literally has control of them. And the Babylonian system of religion is going to be judged for the billions and billions of people she has held captive to this bloody religion that martyrs any who try to expose her.

So, in verse 16 we see what the **ten kings and the beast** will do to Babylon. In a concerted effort they are going to **hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked and eat her flesh and burn her down with fire**. So, what we have here is the fact that by this time in the Tribulation the **ten kings and the beast** will no longer need the **harlot**. The **beast** will have reached world power and so, the beast will buck her off his back. He's no longer going to carry her. So, what was once a love affair between the beast and the harlot will suddenly turn into bitter hatred. And the ten king-beast alliance

will first **make her desolate**. This word refers to a plundering, they will plunder the wealth of the city that has grown rich by extortion of the world's inhabitants. The beasts plan will be to use this wealth to build his own kingdom. Second, they will **make...her naked**, that is, they will expose her showing everyone her moral corruption. Third, **they will eat her flesh**, that is, just as Jezebel's flesh was eaten by dogs, so these kings will murder the priests and priestesses involved in the hierarchy of the religious system. Lastly, **they will burn her down with fire**. This speaks of the city of Babylon itself in which this religion will have its headquarters. I taught you that this is basically Satan's throne during this future time and it is the same place it began. It has moved around quite a bit through history. It started at Babel, in John's day we see it in Pergamos (Rev 2:13), under Constantine it moved to Rome, Italy, and in the future it will return to a re-built Babylon located on the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq. At this future time, what Antichrist wants to do is destroy this old system and set up a new system centralized in Jerusalem. So, ultimately, Satan is trying to establish his throne and his ruler in Jerusalem where God is planning to establish His throne and His ruler. So, there is a lot going on here for world dominion in these future days.

One of the most remarkable things about all these things is that verse 17 says **God has put into their hearts to do His purpose and to do one purpose and to give their rule to the beast until the words of God will be completed**. See, God has every right to **put** such plans into their heart, even to carry out His judgment on Babylon. The reason he has every right is due to the fact that they have hardened **their hearts** against Him, even to the point that He deals with them solely according to His justice. And so, what we see here is Satan's kingdom beginning to turn in on itself, they're killing one another and this is God, the master chess player orchestrating these events and the final crumbling of Satan's attempt at a universal kingdom centered in Jerusalem. So, God will put into their hearts **to do His purpose and to do one purpose** which is **to give their rule to the beast**. Their coming together will ultimately unify evil and this state of affairs will last **until the words of God are completed**, that is, until the very end of the Tribulation when just as it is reaching its apex it is destroyed. So, we learn from this that God is very gracious and patient but that grace is limited and eventually judgment follows (grace before judgment).

## **THE WOMAN (17:18)**

**Revelation 17:18 And the woman which you saw is the great city having rule over the kings of the earth.**



We already knew this but here the final symbol, the woman is identified. **And the woman which you saw is the great city having rule over the kings of the earth.** This is easy, it's Babylon the great, located on the Euphrates River. This is very clear from several verses in both chapter 17 and 18. Babylon will be the central headquarters of this false religion that has **rule over the kings of the earth** through her corrupting influence.

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