

# God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #24 (Pt. 12)

Revelation 17:1-6  
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Having identified in the previous sermon two major problems with the Preterist's interpretation of Nero as the sixth head of the Beast (in Revelation 17:10), which problems I submit completely dismantle the cornerstone of internal evidence upon which a pre-70 a.d. authorship of the Book of Revelation rests, let us this Lord's Day look once again at Revelation 17 in order to identify three major characters in this chapter so that we can understand what this vision prophesies and what it is intended to teach. The three symbolic characters that we will be briefly considering this Lord's Day are: (1) The Great Whore; (2) The Beast with the Seven Heads; and (3) The Revived Eighth Head.

## **I. The Great Whore (Revelation 17:1-6,18).**

A. The symbol of a whore or harlot in this context is one that speaks of woman who is unfaithful to her husband and who commits spiritual fornication with the nations of the world by means of her idolatry, superstition, tyranny, and persecution of the faithful Church of Jesus Christ. The Great Whore is presented before our eyes in stark contrast to a woman that is faithful to her husband (in Revelation 12:1-6). I submit this Great Whore represents the Romish Church and particularly its clergy. For notice the following identifying marks of the Great Whore.

1. This Great Whore sits upon many waters (in Revelation 17:1) which "waters" represent "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Revelation 17:15). In other words, this harlot Church is not limited to a small geographical area in promoting its spiritual fornication of Christ and the true religion of the Bible, but is an international Church

that encompasses even whole nations. That certainly is true of the Church of Rome (presently with over one billion members worldwide).

2. This Great Whore also is said to sit in a more specific way upon the Beast with the seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 17:3). And by way of interpretation, the angel tells John that this means that the harlot sits upon seven mountains or hills (Revelation 17:9). As indicated in the previous sermon, Rome (at the time of the Apostle John) was identified as the city built upon seven hills by various ancient sources. Thus, this Great Whore has a specific relationship to the city of Rome, and can be none other than the Roman Catholic Church and her clergy. In fact, her headquarters are located in “that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18), which once again identifies this harlot Church with the city of Rome and its vast empire.

3. This Great Harlot was clothed in “purple and scarlet” (Revelation 17:4), colors that speak of her claim to royalty which emperors, kings, and nations have granted to her throughout her history. Even the bishops, archbishops, and cardinals of Rome are found on official occasions clothed in such “royal” garments of purple and scarlet.

4. This Great Harlot is further said to be “decked with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Revelation 17:4), which wealth has been the reward of her spiritual fornication committed with the kings and nations of the world. Who is not impressed by the sheer value in gold and the wealth found in the many cathedrals of the Romish Church found in Rome and in most major cities of the world?

5. This Great Harlot is also said to have “a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (Revelation 17:4), which I submit could not better represent the abomination of her mass wherein the priest by his words allegedly transforms mere bread and wine into the literal body and blood of Christ and then worships that bread and wine. By the idolatrous mass in allegedly and blasphemously

creating God and then worshipping its creation, the clergy of Rome promote idolatry of every kind (not only in the alleged transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the actual body of the God-man, Jesus Christ, but as well in the bowing down to images and praying to departed saints—all in violation of the First Commandment and the Second Commandment, Exodus 20:3-6). But she is also “the Great Whore” because she offers to the kings and nations of the world another head of the Church than the Christ of the Bible (though Christ alone is the head of the Church, not only in heaven but on earth as well, Ephesians 4:15). Dear ones, Antichrist is not first and foremost one who appears outwardly to be hostile and opposed to Christ, but rather is first and foremost one who supplants and stands in the place of Christ in taking up his seat in the temple (or Church of Christ) as its head, claiming for himself titles and honor which belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Romish priesthood offers as head of the Church upon earth a substitute Christ (i.e. an Antichrist) to the kings and nations of the world rather than the only head of the Church, Jesus Christ, and this too is an abomination.

6. Finally, note concerning this Great Harlot that is revealed in Revelation 17 that she is “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). I submit there is no ecclesiastical institution that has more blood of faithful Christians upon its hands than that of the hierarchy of the Church of Rome. It is stated by historians that literally millions upon millions of Christians have died by the complicity of the Pope and hierarchy of Rome with the civil Beast to eliminate faithful witnesses who stood against the idolatry, superstition, tyranny, and usurpation of Christ’s titles and honor promoted by the Great Whore.

B. But also note that this Great Whore is identified by other symbolic characters in the Book of Revelation as well.

1. I submit this Great Whore (of Revelation 17) is one and the same with the second Beast that came up out of the earth who had two horns like a lamb and yet spoke as a dragon in Revelation 13:11-15. This second Beast is an ecclesiastical Beast in contrast to the first Beast, which is a civil Beast. For this second Beast is in effect a lamb outwardly that appears to represent the Lamb of God, but actually speaks on behalf of the dragon by means of deceiving the nations of the world through the lying “miracles” it performs (Revelation 13:13-14, which likewise is said about the man of sin who sits and rules in Christ’s Church, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). One of the “miracles” that this second Beast performs is that it gives life and breath to “the image of the Beast” (Revelation 13:14-15). There are so many lying “wonders and miracles” associated with the holy sites and relics of the Romish Church that it would be hard to number them all (which should remind us of what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23). It is the clergy and hierarchy that in fact gave life to the papacy by way of gradual honor and worship until the Pope was acknowledged to be the head of the universal Church upon earth and the Vicar of Christ (and they still give life to the Pope every time a new Pope is elected). He is said to be “the image” of the first Beast (i.e. the image of the civil Beast) because he acts as emperor over his worldwide ecclesiastical empire.

2. I submit this Great Whore (of Revelation 17) is also one and the same with the False Prophet that is revealed in Revelation 16:13-14 and Revelation 19:20 (where the False Prophet appears with the Beast and is cast alive into hell with the Beast). As a False Prophet, the Romish Church (through her Pope and hierarchy) decrees false doctrine, corrupt worship, and tyrannical Church government contrary to the revealed will of Christ in Scripture—all the while claiming to be speaking on behalf of Christ.

C. Preterists interpret the Great Whore (of Revelation 17) to be apostate Jerusalem which had indeed become an unfaithful spouse to the Lord and had exchanged her loyalty to God for loyalty to idolatrous kings (through her alliances and covenants with them), had rejected her Messiah, and had conspired to put Him to death and to persecute those who followed Him. However, I submit that it is not Jerusalem that is represented in Revelation 17 as the Great Whore, but is rather the Romish Church for the following reasons.

1. This Great Whore is “that great city” (Rome) which reigns over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:18), and she sits upon the city of the seven hills, Rome (Revelation 17:9). I submit that could only be the Romish Church.

2. This Great Whore is burned and destroyed by the ten horns (or ten kings), and yet according to the angel, these ten horns had not yet received their kingdoms so as to rule at the time of the Apostle John, but were to receive their kingdoms in the future when a united Roman Empire became a divided Roman Empire overrun in the west by ten barbarian kings and kingdoms (Revelation 17:12,16). Thus, the burning of the Great Whore could not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 a.d.) by Rome or by some alleged ten Provincial Rulers of Rome because these Provincial Rulers had already received their kingdoms at the time of John, whereas the ten kings of Revelation 17:12 had not yet divided the western Roman Empire or received their kingdoms when John penned this vision. Thus, the fulfillment of this prophecy awaited a future time after the division of the Roman Empire into ten kingdoms (which subsequently became Europe) and after the original ten kingdoms join with the revived eighth head of the Beast (i.e. a revived Roman Empire).

3. It is said of the Apostle John (in Revelation 17:6) that “he wondered with great admiration” (literally, “he wondered with great wonderment”) at the Great Whore who was drunken with blood of the

saints and of the martyrs. This would seem to indicate an astonishment on John's part concerning the slaying of the faithful witnesses of Christ by the Great Whore. Certainly, John would not be astonished to see the harlot drunk with the blood of the faithful witnesses of Christ if the harlot represented apostate Jerusalem, for John knew very well the history of Jerusalem in persecuting and slaying faithful witnesses of the Lord (even having conspired to slay the Lord of glory Himself). Therefore, I submit it was not something John already knew that astonished him, but rather something he did not know, namely, the slaying of so many millions of faithful witness of Christ by the Great Whore of Rome that was to come yet in the future that astonished him, which was to be fulfilled over hundreds of years as the Church of Rome conspired with kings and nations to destroy millions of faithful witnesses of Christ who have ever stood for Christ and His truth against the idolatry, superstition, and tyranny of the Great Whore of Rome, and against "the man of sin" (the papacy) that usurps the place of Christ over His Church.

## **II. The Beast with the Seven Heads (Revelation 17:3,7-10).**

A. This Beast of Revelation is the same as Daniel's fourth Beast: namely, the political kingdom of Rome. In Daniel's vision there are four Beasts that represent four political kingdoms, one succeeding the other after the downfall of each: (1) The first Beast, which was like a lion, was the political kingdom of Babylon (Daniel 7:3); (2) The second Beast, which was like a bear, was the political kingdom of Medo-Persia (Daniel 7:5); (3) The third Beast, which was like a leopard, was the political kingdom of Greece (Daniel 7:6); (4) The fourth Beast was not described as looking like any particular animal, but it is said to be exceedingly strong (Daniel 7:7)—this was the political kingdom of Rome. Now as we turn to compare the fourth Beast of Daniel with the Beast of Revelation, it is clearly the same political Beast that is in view. Note that the civil Beast of Revelation is

described as having the same bestial characteristics of the three previous political Beasts of Daniel (a lion, a bear, and a leopard in Revelation 13:2). Furthermore, just as Daniel's fourth civil Beast (i.e. the political kingdom of Rome) had ten horns (Daniel 7:7), so the Beast of Revelation has ten horns as well (Revelation 13:1). In fact, the detail added to the political Beast of Revelation that was not found in Daniel's fourth political Beast is that this Beast of Revelation has seven heads (Revelation 13:1; Revelation 17:3) which are explained in Revelation 17:9-10. Note the explanation of the seven heads given by the angel.

1. First, the seven heads are said by the angel to represent seven mountains or hills (Revelation 17:9). As already indicated earlier in the sermon (and in the previous sermon as well), that was a familiar designation among the ancients for Rome—the city built upon seven hills. Moreover, the Great Whore that sits upon the seven hills (Revelation 17:9) is likewise identified with “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” which refers to Rome and its worldwide empire (Revelation 17:18). Thus, I submit the Beast of Revelation that has the seven heads is clearly identified as the political kingdom of Rome (as is the fourth Beast of Daniel).

2. Second, the seven heads of the political kingdom of Rome are said by the angel to represent seven “kings” (Revelation 17:10). Who are these seven “kings”?

- a. Since the Beast of Revelation is the political kingdom of Rome, the seven heads must be identified as heads or powers of political Rome and not heads of other world empires. Therefore, the interpretation offered by some that the seven heads are seven different world powers cannot be correct—for the simple reason that the seven heads are powers that govern the Beast of political Rome alone. Thus, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece cannot be the five heads that have fallen in Revelation 17:10, with Rome being the sixth head that is presently reigning when John pens the Book of Revelation

(Revelation 17:10), and with the Gothic kings being the seventh head that reign for a short while (Revelation 17:10) before the appearance of the eighth head of the Beast (in Revelation 17:11). Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece did not reign as heads over political Rome. How could foreign kingdoms which ruled in power (some hundreds of years before Rome) be said to reign as heads over the political kingdom of Rome? They could not.

b. Because it has already been demonstrated in the previous sermon on Revelation 17 that the individual Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Galba (Nero being identified by Preterists as the sixth head that is presently reigning and Galba the seventh head that reigns a short while) cannot be what the angel means by the seven heads, I will refer you back to the previous sermon wherein you will find the reasons why that interpretation offered by Preterists cannot be reconciled with the inspired text.

c. Thus, we now come to the historic, Protestant interpretation of the seven heads of the civil Beast of Rome, namely, that the seven heads refer not to individual kings, but to a succession of kings or rulers that serve under seven different stages or forms of kingly rule within the political kingdom of Rome.

1. Note that in Daniel 7:17 the four political kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are called “four kings” in the English text as well as in the Hebrew text; whereas in Daniel 7:23 these four kings are referred to as “kingdoms” in the English text as well as in the Hebrew text. Why is that significant? It demonstrates that the word “king” does not have to refer to a single, individual king, but may actually stand for a kingdom or form of kingly rule that includes a succession of kings or rulers within it.

2. Thus, when Revelation 17:10 says that the seven heads are seven kings, we likewise understand there to be a succession of rulers under each of the seven kings or seven stages of kingly rule



within the political kingdom of Rome. The following six stages of kingly rule in political Rome have been identified by two ancient Roman historians: Livy (who lived from 59 b.c.—circa 17 a.d.) and Tacitus (who lived from 56 a.d.—circa 118), both of whom identify the first six stages of kingly rule within political Rome as the following: (1) Kings; (2) Consuls; (3) The Council of Ten; (4) Military Tribunes; (5) Dictators; and (6) Emperors (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, p.1; Livy, *Book 1:60, Book 3:33, Book 4:7*).

3. These were well-known and well-recognized stages or forms of kingly rule in Rome. Thus, when the angel states in Revelation 17:10 that five of these kings are fallen at the time in which John pens the Book of Revelation, we should identify those five kings or stages of kingly rule as: (1) The Kings of Rome; (2) The Consuls of Rome; (3) The Council of Ten of Rome; (4) The Military Tribunes of Rome; and (5) The Dictators of Rome.

4. When the angel explains that one king is presently ruling (“five are fallen, and one is” Revelation 17:10), that would be the sixth head of rule within the political kingdom of Rome, namely, The Emperors of Rome (which was the stage of kingly rule at the time that John wrote the Book of Revelation). The sixth head of the Roman Beast (that of The Emperors of Rome) continued until Romulus Augustus was forced to abdicate the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 476 a.d., which I submit was the point in time in which the sixth head of the Roman Beast received its deadly wound (as indicated in Revelation 13:3,12,14).

5. This deadly wound to the Emperors of the Western Roman Empire left the divided Western Roman Empire and particularly Rome under continuous upheaval with various barbarian rulers or the Emperor of the Eastern Empire vying for power for over two hundred and fifty years.

6. Then the seventh head of the Roman Beast appeared in 753 a.d. when Pope Stephen II conferred upon Pepin III and

his son, Charlemagne, the title of “Patrician of the Romans” (i.e. Father or Defender of the Romans). This seventh head of Rome continued for “a short space”, about 47 years (Revelation 17:10). But it was not until the revived Eighth head of the Roman political Beast that we see the Romish Church sitting upon a revived Western Roman Empire with its own Emperor.

### **III. The revived or healed Eighth Head (Revelation 17:11).**

A. As we now come to consider the revived eighth head of the Roman Beast, I must depart from those who identify the revived eighth head of the Beast with the papacy of Rome for the following reasons.

1. First, as we noted earlier, the four Beasts of Daniel represent political kingdoms not ecclesiastical kingdoms (whether Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, or Rome). And since the fourth Beast of Daniel (political Rome) is clearly one and the same with the Beast of Revelation (as was demonstrated earlier in this sermon), the Beast of Revelation in its revived eighth head must also be an expression of political Rome not ecclesiastical Rome.

2. Second, the heads of the Roman Beast are likewise strictly political and civil in nature, rather than ecclesiastical. Although the Beast of Rome as a political and civil Beast supports and carries the Great Whore (i.e. the papal Romish Church) upon its back, there is clearly a distinction intended between the Beast (which is civil and political Rome) and the Great Whore (which is ecclesiastical and religious Rome) here in Revelation 17. The same distinction is also seen between the political Beast of Rome and the ecclesiastical Beast of Rome (in Revelation 13). The same distinction is also seen in Revelation 16:13 and Revelation 19:20 between the political Beast of Rome and the False Prophet (which is the papal Church of Rome). The political Beast of Rome carries out the decrees of the Great Whore (the papal Church of Rome) in warring

against the saints (as we see in Revelation 13:7), for the political Beast of Rome has the military might to do so, whereas the papal Church does not have such a military might and power to do so. The papacy throughout history has joined hands with the political Beast to war against the saints and to drink the blood of the saints. Since the first seven heads of the Roman Beast are political and civil powers (as opposed to ecclesiastical powers), I submit that likewise the revived eighth head of the Roman Beast is also a political and civil power. Thus, the revived eighth head of the political Beast is not the papacy.

3. The third reason why I do not believe the revived eighth head of the Roman Beast is the papacy is because Revelation 17:11 states that the eighth head “is of the seven” or literally “is OUT OF the seven.” However, the papacy is not one of the seven political heads, but as an ecclesiastical ruler, it would not be the revival of any of the previous political heads, but would be a new head altogether entirely distinct from the previous seven political heads. In other words, the revived eighth head of the Roman Beast is the healing of one of the seven political heads of the kingdom of Rome, namely, the sixth head that had received the deadly wound. Which was the sixth head of the Roman Beast? The sixth political head was that of the Roman Emperors which received the deadly wound when Emperor Romulus Augustus was deposed from the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 476 a.d. But the deadly wound of the sixth head in the Western or Latin Roman Empire was healed when the eighth head continued the Western Roman Empire with its own Emperor. For when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne in St. Peters in Rome, he crowned him as Emperor of the Roman Empire (December 25, 800). Charlemagne’s official title was “most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific [peaceful—GLP] emperor, governing the Roman Empire.” There began the list of Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne being listed as the first emperor.

a. Thus, the very reason why in the Book of Revelation this Beast is always said to be a Beast with “seven heads” rather than a Beast with “eight heads” is because the eighth head is simply a revived continuation of one of the previous seven political heads, namely, the sixth head of Roman Emperors that was given a deadly wound when Romulus Augustus was deposed from power in 476 a.d.

b. It is this relationship of the Great Whore (the papal Church of Rome) riding upon the revived Roman Empire that I submit is specifically in view in Revelation 17 and which subsequently brought about the mass slaughter of millions of faithful witnesses who stood against both the civil Beast and the ecclesiastical Beast.

c. The revived Holy Roman Empire included in it most of Europe where the original ten horns had settled. I would submit that the fulfillment of the destruction of the Great Whore by the ten horns or kingdoms (Revelation 17:16) is yet future since the papal Church of Rome (and her hierarchy) have not yet been destroyed at the present time. However, I would propose from what is said in Revelation 17:16 that when the papal Church of Rome is destroyed, it will be the posterity of the original ten horns or kingdoms of Europe whose eyes are illuminated to see the abominations of the Great Whore and who will come to Christ as nations and kingdoms that will destroy her. This will be a prelude to the fullness of the Gentile nations and the nation of Israel being brought into the Visible Church by the power of the Holy Spirit (as prophesied in Romans 11:25-26).

In conclusion, let us not forget even in the midst of such political and ecclesiastical revolutions and upheavals who is in control (Revelation 17:17). Dear ones, the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord, and he directs the king’s heart wherever He wills it to go for His own holy and wise purposes (Proverbs 21:1). And if the Lord is able to turn the hearts

of these ten kings/kingdoms in the future to Christ so that they rise up to destroy the Great Whore of papal Rome, He is certainly able to bring the fullness of the Gentile nations and the nation of Israel to Christ and into the Visible Church (in fulfillment of the prophecy found in Romans 11:25-26). And if our mighty Savior is able to save the ten kingdoms, and is able to save the fullness of the Gentile nations, and is able to save all Israel as a nation, He is able to save that child, or that parent, or that brother, or that sister for whom you have prayed for so long. Dear ones, do not despair in your prayers for those loved ones. He is infinitely able to accomplish all of His most holy and most wise purposes for the salvation of His people—even for those who may seem to be most hopeless!

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