

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- In chapter 16 we saw all the final plagues poured out, and the world prepared for Armageddon. At this point, chapters 17 and 18 are a further explanation of the end judgments. Most likely the judgment of the “harlot” is happening at the same time, or near the same time.
- Babylon is a key symbol in scripture, and as such these chapters take the time to explain who she is and why she is being judged. It is important to our understanding of what God expects of His people, and those who follow Him, and what can be expected from, and for, the world that does not.

NOTE: As detailed as this lesson may seem, there are entire libraries full of information about this chapter alone and all the speculation that surrounds it. We are merely scratching the surface. If you are interested in more than what we have provided here, we encourage you to do your own research, but beware, it will not be a short or light endeavor!

¹ 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.”

- The main character here receives **more attention than any other symbol** in the Book of Revelation. This character is a woman, and she is surrounded by more identifying clues than any other character or symbol in Revelation.
- “...the great harlot...” The biggest question obviously in this chapter is just **who is this harlot?** Notice that she is being judged, and the entire earth has “committed fornication” with her. It is apparent that this person is not of God. This harlot and the earthly kings and peoples who interact with her are symbolic for something. The harlot is not new in scripture. We need to remember where else she is referenced. A woman is often used in scripture as a seductress, someone that seduces or entices people away from God.
- Here this woman is identified as a **harlot, a very developed symbol in the Old Testament of God’s people, or a system, who have “prostituted” themselves with other gods, with other systems, with other forms of government or ways of doing things that are not God’s ways.**



- The harlot is a symbol of religious apostasy or rebellion against God. It is a religious system, or people, with wrong teachings that ignores the word of God. Harlotry can also mean false devotion, flatteries (See Jeremiah 3:6, 8, 9; Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 1:2; Revelation 2:22); feigned love, pretended affection, intimacy for favors. Jerusalem was called a harlot (See Isaiah 1:21); Tyre was a harlot (See Isaiah 23:16-17); as was Nineveh (See Nahum 3:4) In essence, God uses the image of the harlot to represent the whole of false worship. We will have several (10) clues regarding her identity given to us in this chapter, so watch for them and we will discuss more about the harlot in a moment.
- *“who sits on many waters...”* In scripture, many waters are symbolic for many peoples from all nations. This phrase is generally a representation the nations of the world. This is interpreted for us in verse 15.
- The Harlot is **not to be confused with the woman in Chapter 12**. Here are some differences:

Feature	Woman in Chapter 12 (Israel)	Woman in Chapter 17 (Harlot)
Where	In Heaven	In Wilderness
Mother	Of Son	Of Harlots
Clothed	With Sun	Purple, scarlet, gold
Influence	Sun, moon, stars	Kings of earth
Enemy	Dragon	10 kings (ultimately)
Nature	Pure	Harlot
Relationship	Hated by powers of earth	Caressed by them
Sustained by	Wings of heaven	dragon
“Headdress”	Crown of 12 stars	Forehead
Final location	New Jerusalem	Habitation of demons

- *“...committed fornication, made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”* In scripture, fornication is spoken of both in literal physical terms (as a sin) and in spiritual terms, symbolic for prostituting one’s self, or as an entire group, with foreign gods. The only true worship is of Almighty God, which He demands. Israel was considered a harlot who had prostituted herself with all the foreign gods around her, since she is pictured as the wife of God. Now, in this verse, the implication is much wider than Israel. **This fornication is of all the peoples of the earth, against God**. God is the true husband, and His people, Jews and Gentiles, have committed fornication in His eyes, with the Harlot (the false gods of this world).
- The harlot has committed fornication with the kings of the Earth. Fornication here is identified as the union of the church with human political kingdoms. By "joining herself" to the kingdoms of the world, she (**the apostate church**) has spiritually committed herself to the world in place of staying committed to Christ. Remember, the Church is likened to the bride, and Christ as to the bridegroom. By going after the world, and the idolatry of the worldly systems, she has committed spiritual adultery.

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.

There is a great deal of information here we need to look at...

- **“...into the wilderness...”** The wilderness is a place of desolation. When God’s people were led into the wilderness He protected them, taught them, and provided for them. However, because of their many sins and continued rebellion, the first generation died in the wilderness and did not go into the promised land. This harlot and the beast will also die in this wilderness because they are in opposition to God, will not leave their sins behind, and He will not tolerate them any longer. They will not enter the spiritual promised land either.
- **“...woman sitting on a scarlet beast...”** This is an important note. This woman, the Harlot, is sitting on the beast. A rider is generally in control of the one being ridden. At this point, it appears that the Harlot controls the beast. The beast is clearly the antichrist, (full of blasphemy, with 7 heads and 10 horns) who will form a one world total government system. The harlot is the false church of the final end days (*we’re giving that away early here to make this point!*). It would seem that we have both church and state represented here, and the church is riding, or controlling, the state. At the beginning...but that doesn’t last...
- **Blasphemy** includes any doctrine that attempts to add to or deny (remove) what God has completed. Salvation by works denies God’s glory, which is blasphemy! Any false doctrine is blasphemy. Cursing the name of God is blasphemy.
- **“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet,...”** The information about the Harlot’s dress is important. She wears the **colors purple and scarlet**, with lots of jewels and pearls. Some have noted that the colors of purple and scarlet are used by Catholic cardinals and bishops, as well as the gold trimmings. Purple was also the predominant color of Roman imperialism; every senator and consul wore a purple stripe as a badge of his position; the emperor’s robes were purple.



“Coincidental???”

LEGEND OF EUROPA

The legend strikes an eerie similarity to the symbols of Revelation.

- Woman riding a beast
- A beast in the sea.
- A forbidden relationship

Zeus saw Europa alone on the beach and lusted after her. So he transformed himself into a bull and lay down at her feet. She climbed on his back and he plunged with her into the waves of the sea and raped her. She conceived a son, and after her death she received divine honors as "Queen of Heaven". The bull became the constellation Taurus. The legend of Europa has come alive in the European Union. *(more later)*

- Perhaps a more important clue, however, is the fact that God commanded the priest's dress, and key portions of the Tabernacle embroideries, to also be purple and scarlet, and one more color. What color is missing from the Harlot of the three commanded? **Blue.** So what significance does blue have? The following verses are very interesting, especially when considered here: *“Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.”* (Numbers 15:37-41)
- The Harlot tries to mimic (counterfeit) the true faith that God commanded, but with **one vital element missing: The Word of God.** Notice also she is fabulously bedecked with precious jewels. Purple, scarlet and gold were considered only for the wealthy. This Harlot is fabulously wealthy. We should remember that the early organized Church also gained incredible wealth, and also ruled the governments of the world. The picture of this Harlot is getting clearer.
- *“...golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”* This Harlot has been drinking to her heart's content all of the abominations and sins of the ages. She is intoxicated on sin, rebellion, apostasy, and the fact that she is leading God's people away from Him. The cup is significant, as the “cup” is symbolic in scripture of drinking judgment. “Golden cup,” religious intoxication of the anti-church (not the antichrist), a pseudo-religion counterfeit. (See Jeremiah 51:7)

“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” This is a fascinating phrase, and one which has caused no end of speculation. We need to consider the following:

- **MYSTERY:** The term used is *musterion*, meaning “secret revealed.” Mystery Babylon vs. Mystery of the “True Church” (See Ephesians 3:1-9). In Ephesians, the Church is called a “mystery” by Paul. It was something previously hidden, or not revealed in scripture, though it was there. Paul then explains the concept of the Church as the Bride of Christ. Here is another mystery, another church. But this church is false, and we can assume at this point it is the final, end times apostate church. Wicked and phony.
- **“BABYLON THE GREAT....”** Babylon is first mentioned in scripture in Genesis 10 (The Euphrates River as early as Genesis 2:14) and appears more than 300 times in the Bible. Today it still exists as a literal city, located about 62 miles south of Bagdad in current Iraq. **Origin and History:** **Nimrod**, the first world dictator (name means “rebel”) built the **Tower of Bab-el** as the center piece of his rebellion against God. The word *Bav* (our *Bab*) means “gate” and *El* means God. Bab-el translates to “gateway to the gods.” This was the beginning of the city of Babylon. The ziggurat was later rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar as *Etemenanki*, “the building which is the foundation of heaven and earth.” God disrupted this rebellious coalition by confusing their tongues in Genesis 11. In 627 BC Nabopolassar, father to **Nebuchadnezzar**, led a rebellion to break Babylon away from the Assyrians and establish a new empire, which would go on to become a true world empire under Nebuchadnezzar. In 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, taking the first wave of captives into **captivity in Babylon.**

- Nineteen years later in 587 BC, after continuous rebellion by the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar came back to Jerusalem (the third time) and completely destroyed the Temple, and took the remaining Jews into Babylonian captivity. 70 years after the captivity began, just on schedule per God's prophecies, **Cyrus the Great**, the Persian king, diverted the Euphrates river and entered the grand city of Babylon to conquer it without a fight. The events of that night inside Babylon can be read in Daniel 5. This ended the Babylonian empire, and began the Persian empire.
- Throughout successive empires, Babylon was never destroyed, since it was such a magnificent city. **Alexander the Great** died there, after having conquered the Persian empire, sweeping in the Greek empire. Over the successive years, Babylon fell into disrepair, and was pretty much abandoned to the sands of time – but it was never destroyed.

Recently it has popped up again as the center of a world effort to make it a tourist attraction, and earlier during the first Iraq war (Desert Storm, 1991).

- **Saddam Hussein**, the former dictator of Iraq, had been rebuilding Babylon for many years, pouring millions of dollars into its restoration. He successfully rebuilt the famed dining hall and throne room where the handwriting on the wall took place in Daniel 5. This huge ceremonial room has been used for various state functions over the past several years of Hussein's dictatorship. Babylon is currently occupied by coalition military forces in place for the recent Iraq war.

U.S. TO HELP REBUILD CITY OF BABYLON IN IRAQ



Iraqi soldiers walk past a replica of the Ishtar Gate of Ancient Babylon, south of Baghdad, January 13, 2009. (Reuters photo)

Largely overlooked by the Western news media over the past few weeks was an enormously significant story. The government of Iraq is moving forward with plans to protect the archaeological remains of the ancient City of Babylon, in preparation for building a modern city of Babylon. The project, originally started by the late Saddam Hussein, is aimed eventually at attracting scores of "cultural tourists" from all over the world to see the glories of Mesopotamia's most famous city. What's more, the Obama Administration is contributing \$700,000 towards "The Future of Babylon Project," through the State Department's budget.

"Officials hope Babylon can be revived and made ready for a rich future of tourism, with help from experts at the World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the U.S. embassy," reports the Reuters news agency. "'The Future of Babylon' project launched last month seeks to 'map the current conditions of Babylon and develop a master plan for its conservation, study and tourism,' the WMF says. 'We don't know how long it will take to reopen to tourists,' said Mariam Omran Musa, head of a government inspection team based at the site. 'It depends on funds. I hope that Babylon can be reborn in a better image.'"

- There are international plans in the works to rebuild the Tower of Babel as a hotel, with a monorail to connect the city features. A 400-seat Greek style theater, built during the reign of Alexander, is also being reconstructed.
- **All forms of occultic practices had their origins in the original city of Babylon.** Isaiah Chapter 47 brings this out clearly. A few examples...
 - Tammuz, the son of Nimrod and his queen, Semiramis, was identified with the Babylonian Sun God, and worshipped following the winter solstice (December 22-23). As Babylon was conquered by subsequent empires, this entire religious system was transplanted, first to Pergamos (See Revelation 2:12-17) and then to Rome. When Constantine established Christianity as the official state religion of Rome, many of the religious traditions and practices of the earlier pagan worship were adopted and incorporated into the resulting system. As the Babylonian religious system was integrated with Christian ceremonial observances, many of our traditions surrounding both Christmas and Easter emerged, based on this pagan culture.
 - The Babylonian worship of Ishtar (the mother goddess of Babylon), the Golden Egg of Astarte, and the fertility rites of spring give us Easter.
 - The calendar year-end on October 31, and its associated occultic rituals, give us Halloween. Many ancient cultures (Celts, Druids, etc.) observed October 31, the Eve of Samhain, as their year-end. This was related to the worship of Baal (Mars) and may have been stimulated by a disturbance of the orbit of the earth associated with the planet Mars (*there is astronomical evidence to support this*).
- There are some who regard “Mystery Babylon” as a **symbolic allusion to the United States**. The idea relies heavily on the Greco-Roman aesthetic traditions of Washington architecture, Columbia as a woman figure, Masonic influences on early heraldry, etc. Most likely, however, Babylon represents ALL the world who worships the enemy and practices those things which are “an abomination” to God, in opposition to Him.
- Some also believe that the **Babylon in Chapter 17 and 18 are different**; an ecclesiastical (religious) Babylon and a commercial Babylon. This seems logical, as the **focus of chapter 17 is on the spiritual**, false worship and ritual that is in opposition to God, with the enemies of this book featured (the beast, woman riding the beast). The **focus of chapter 18 is on commerce, business**, and the way in which the world in general opposes God’s ways and does business wickedly.
- **Babylon**, (beginning at Ezekiel 28:2, 6-10) has been considered a Harlot for many years prior to this time.
- It is important to note that **Babylon has never been destroyed**. There is a literal and prophetic difference between the FALL of Babylon as a world empire, and the DESTRUCTION of Babylon as a city. In 539 BC, Cyrus and the Persians defeated Babylon, and the Babylonian empire fell. But the city was never destroyed. It was occupied by the Persians and the Greeks during their subsequent empires, and even by the Romans. It fell into ruin over the years from neglect, not war. It has never been completely abandoned, which is also prophesied. But has been continually inhabited by Bedouins and others. Parts of it have been rebuilt, but not completely. In order to accurately fulfill prophecy it appears that Babylon will be rebuilt and may become the headquarters of the final world government before its complete destruction. (See Isaiah 13:19, 20; Jeremiah 50:39-40).

- **The Destruction of Babylon in Prophecy.** Read all 6 chapters in one sitting to capture the impact.

	Isaiah 13	Isaiah 14	Jeremiah 50	Jeremiah 51	Revelation 17	Revelation 18
Many nations attacking	4, 5	2, 26	29, 41, 46	7	16	
Israel in Land, forgiven		1	4, 20			
Like Sodom & Gomorrah	19		40			
Never to be inhabited; bricks never used	20	23	13, 26, 39	26, 29, 37		
During "Day of the Lord"	6, 10, 11, 13		25			
Literal Babylon (Chaldean)	19	22	50	4, 24, 63		
King's fornication, drunk with wine...				7	2	3, 9
Scarlet, purple, golden cup				7	3, 4	6, 16

- ***“THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS...”*** Notice this harlot is not alone. The Harlot is the mother of many daughter churches that have followed in her sin. Women, in symbolic Bible prophecy, represent Churches. So the "Mother Church" has other churches that have come out of her, and have her characteristics still in them. The "Mother Church" has influenced her "daughters" to also become harlots. They apostatize from their proper relationship to Christ (God) and became guilty of prostitution with the world and idolatry. This can be true of ANY church, ANY denomination. This is especially true today of what is called the “emergent” church. The Catholic Church could be considered the first of the organized Christian churches. The history of the Catholic church is full of bloodshed, incredible riches and wealth, and political intrigue. The corruption of the organized church is what led to the many “breakaways” into Protestantism, and other areas. Sadly, these too have become corrupt for the most part. It is becoming very difficult to find a solid Bible truth based church that is not more concerned with political rightness, world acceptance and social agendas than the truth of God’s Word.
- ***“...drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”*** This “church” is and has been actively involved in the persecution of believers, both the Tribulation saints, and earlier martyrs of Jesus. There is a certain euphoria here. This harlot enjoys and revels in the persecution of God’s own.
- ***“And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”*** John is stunned by what he sees in this vision of the harlot. The vision is bad enough, and the images here are very disturbing. However, we believe there is more going on here than merely John’s reaction to a terrible image.

- The Greek words used here, though translated in the KJV as “admiration” instead of “amazement,” actually are better translated as a great wonder, something amazing and surprising. When we read the remainder of these verses it seems that the only thing that John needed explaining was the beast, the heads and the horns and the kings. He did not get an interpretation of who or what the harlot was because he didn’t need one. He knew it was the Church, or God’s people, since that’s what a harlot has been all throughout scripture. John knows this harlot represents the unfaithful apostate church. The only church John knew in Rome was one that was persecuted, and met secretly underground in the catacombs. **Seeing this incredible harlot has him completely confused and amazed. He could not imagine that the fledgling Christian faith could become this harlot, big, powerful and fearsome.**
- **INTERESTING NOTE:** We need to remember that there are four women in the book of Revelation, each one portrays a religious system or group, either faithful, or faithless: 1) Jezebel (chapter 2) who represented the corruption in the local church at Thyatira, 2) The woman and her child (chapter 12), who represented Israel and the Messiah, 3) This Harlot of Babylon, who stands for the faithless apostate end time church, and all corruption of the “church” through the ages, and 4) The Bride of Christ, the Lamb’s (Jesus) wife, the believing Church. God has consistently used the image of a harlot throughout scripture to paint a picture of the faithless church or group. John knows what the harlot is. He just can’t believe what the organized church becomes.

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.

- The angel notes that John is wondering about all this, and indicates the mystery is about to be revealed. However, the angel also knows John understands the image of the harlot. It’s everything else that needs to be revealed.

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.”

- This verse has caused great confusion and speculation. We have to take this apart to understand it.
- **First, “the beast...”** We already know this identity from chapter 13. This is the human antichrist, the final world ruler. However, the phrase “...was, and is not, and will ascend...” and later in verse 11 “the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth...” makes this entire passage a puzzle. There is no end to interpretations of this phrase. The most prominent interpretations are that this represents the entire Roman Empire (or even imperialism as a world system) which was beginning its downward spiral at this point, but would be “resurrected” in the end times as the “revived Roman empire.” However, this is about the beast, not necessarily his kingdom, so it could also be a reference to the fact that the beast will apparently “die” then be resurrected, though many believe this will only be a grand deception. (*More later in verse 11.*)
- **“...will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition...”** This phrase tells us the satanic origin (and ultimate destination) of the beast. Many believe that the antichrist will be indwelt by satan at this point, following his apparent “resurrection.”

- *“...those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world...”* Here is that phrase again that indicates unbelievers, those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. These people will marvel at the course of events covered in these verses. They will be deceived because they do not know the Lamb and follow Him. They follow the earthly king and apparently something happens to amaze them. This is most often interpreted as the apparently “fatal” wound from which the antichrist recovers. This alone can explain the “was, and is not, and yet is.”
- Some scholars have even gone so far as to indicate that this relates to an **historical figure who is “reincarnated” or comes back from the dead as the antichrist**. The most popular figures for this are purported to be Judas Iscariot (some interesting arguments for this), or even world rulers like Nero, Hitler, etc. This does not seem likely in view of certain other verses that preclude reincarnation as a method in which God works. Reincarnation is not supported by God’s Word.
- Whatever or whoever these verses refer to it is obviously the revival, the bringing back to life, of either: 1) Rome as world power; 2) imperial-style government; 3) the final world ruler, the beast himself. Either way, all of these things are going to happen, and it is not important for us to know precisely who or what this is, just that it will be revived, and it comes from the pit of hell. *(People have spent lifetimes trying to decipher these mysterious passages. Perhaps people living in this time will only be able to put the pieces together after the fact.)*

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.*

- Verse 9 indicates another **challenge to use wisdom** (and not worldly wisdom) to decipher these verses. To understand the precise meanings of these verses requires God’s revelation, and a thorough understanding of the word of God. It also implies that the one with wisdom will “take note” of this, be warned, so to speak.
- *“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.”* Here again is the riddle about seven mountains or hills. Could be Rome, as we indicated. Rome is frequently referenced in this way. Could also represent the world empires throughout history. This woman, the harlot, sits on them, or controls them. Religious systems throughout history have played dominant roles in controlling world governments.
- *“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come.”* Now we have the added bit of information that these hills are also seven kings (remember that the Bible makes no distinction between kings and kingdoms), OR the seven kings are in addition to the seven kingdoms. Some say these kings are the Caesars of Rome. If identified as kingdoms, it would indicate that five of them have come and gone (fallen), one is (Rome) and another still to come (revived Roman Empire). Since Sumeria was the first “kingdom” so to speak in world history, but was not really a world dominating empire like the others, it would not be included as one that had “fallen” so the five would be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece. The one that “is” is the Roman Empire in John’s day. Again, we are living on the side of history that has not yet seen this scripture fulfilled, so at best, we have only speculation.

- ***“And when he comes, he must continue a short time.”*** This refers to the “other has not yet come.” This is either the final world kingdom (perhaps the revived Roman Empire), or the final world ruler, the antichrist. The short time is most likely the 7-year duration of Daniel’s 70th week (see Daniel 9). The kingdom and the king are used interchangeably and identified together in scripture.
- ***“The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”*** Now it gets really confusing! The coming world empire, and the coming final world leader is going to hell, or perdition, that much we can determine easily. However, the part about “is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven,” is a bit puzzling. Perhaps a look at Daniel 7 can help explain this more clearly. ***“I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”*** (Daniel 7:8) This beast has 10 horns (horns represent power, and hence represent kings or government leaders here), as we have seen in this book and in Daniel. The 10 horns are 10 kings, as we see in the next verse. According To Daniel 7, one of these horns, called the “little horn,” takes out 3 of the others, and rises to become the 8th horn. We must put all the puzzle pieces together to begin to see the picture. Revelation is the culmination of all the prophecies that have been in place for thousands of years. We have no hope of understanding it without an understanding and reference to the former prophecies, such as the ones in Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah and many other places. Now, after taking out 3 of the 10 kings, the little horn becomes the 8th power, but all the others “horns” (kings) will hand over their power to this little blasphemous horn (the antichrist) making him the final total world ruler. The “eighth” could also be interpreted as being the eighth final world power, which is an entity all to itself. Whatever these verses relate specifically to, in general they are about the final world empire and the final world ruler.
- **It should be noted here that the Roman Empire never was conquered, or to be considered “fallen.”** Rome died from within, but can still be found in some form in nations across the planet. The Roman Empire began about 100 BC. It continued as a world empire until about 476 AD. However, Rome had an eastern branch of the empire (Byzantine Empire) which lasted until 1453 AD. Even after this, Rome’s brand of imperial rule (empires, emperors) could be found as late as 1918. The German word “Kaiser” literally means Caesar, as does the Russian “Czar.” Essentially Roman imperialism lasted well over 2000 years. Everyone thought it was dead, but apparently it will rise again, for a short time, very intense and very deadly.



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.***

- **We need to continue reading in Daniel 7 for a little help with these verses:** ***“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings.’*** (Daniel 7:23-24)

- **Daniel has a vision of beasts that are related to world kingdoms**, from Babylon through Rome. The fourth or “terrible” beast is Rome. Rome indeed devoured the whole earth and trampled it. It was a brutal force. Now Daniel says there will be 10 kings (or kingdoms) that will come from this fourth beast. These correlate to the 10 toes of the statue in Daniel 2. Out of a revived Roman Empire will come 10 kingdoms and 10 kings over those kingdoms. Again, we hear of one rising and subduing 3 of these kings. For awhile they rule together, but then somehow are talked into giving over all their power to the “little horn” or the antichrist, making him the last king standing, the final world ruler. This vision of Daniel’s is well into the future for him, and even for us. This speaks of a coming geo-political scenario that has not yet happened, thus the “ten kings” don’t have their kingdoms yet. Some speculate that these 10 kings and kingdoms will be geographically apportioned kingdoms, dividing the world into 10 geographic states.



- **“for one hour...”** This would not necessarily be literally one 60 minute period of time. It represents a very short period of time. Keep in mind Daniel’s 70th week is literally 7 years. So the one hour would represent a very small portion of that time. The reign of these kings together, before their power is usurped, will be very short.
- **“These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”** We know the antichrist will be charismatic and very persuasive. In the beginning the kings will reign together. But somehow the little horn will convince the others to give him their power, and he will become the sole world ruler.

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.”

- These **kings will persecute and war against God** (and God’s people, see all of Daniel 7). The Lamb is pictured here, so this is more precisely against Jesus, the true Son of God. But we know the good news, Jesus will overcome the world, and all governments. Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in Daniel 2 is a preview of this. All human government will be destroyed, and the Lamb will take His throne. He is, after all, the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. This war extends to all those who are called by His Name, all believers. We are **called chosen, and faithful**. Many will be martyred for their faith in this time. This is a wonderful ray of hope in an otherwise terrifying and dismal chapter.

15 Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.”

- The harlot, the apostate church, **will influence and deceive ALL**. She has a global influence, and everyone who does not seek the Lamb will be sucked into her deceit. The reference to peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues makes this clear.

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.

- The ten kings or rulers at the end of time, prior to the time the antichrist takes sole control, will come to despise the apostate church, not for her false teachings, but because she is arrogant, proud and gets in the way of what these rulers want to do. Especially one.
- The antichrist seeks worship for himself alone. He will eventually enter the Temple and proclaim himself as god. He is not interested in a world church, or the world worship of him. These **10 kings will do away with this false church**. She will be completely destroyed, with nothing left. Worship of the beast will replace this church as the official “religion.” And it will be mandatory.

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.

- Once again we are reminded that as terrible and amazing as these events are, **God is in control**. He is the One manipulating these world rulers. This reminds us of other scriptures that say He raises up kings and takes them down, and puts in their hearts what He wants them to do. This world is not out of control, nor is the antichrist the one in control. **GOD ALMIGHTY IS IN CONTROL!!**
- The kings do as God intends, and give their power and their kingdoms to the antichrist, in order to fulfill all the prophecies written beforehand about this time. God is controlling history. It is not out of control!

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

- Finally, the last verse seems to be the “kicker” and very difficult to argue about. As John was seeing and writing this, Rome was the only power that “reigned over the kings of the earth.” **Out of Rome came the first organized church**. This seems to be a pretty strong and irrefutable clue. However, we must remember this is prophecy about the END times. Perhaps this reference is to the final world power, or final city of power, the headquarters of the beast.
- This brings in a lot of speculation about whether Babylon is really a **code name for Rome** (which many suggest the early disciples used) and that literal Babylon is not referenced in this passage. They say the real “great city” is Rome, the origin of the organized church, hence the identity of the harlot. However, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that literal Babylon will be rebuilt, and might even become the headquarters of the beast, and fulfill the *“great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”*
- There is an interesting passage in Zechariah 5, about the woman identified as evil and wickedness, being kept in a basket until relocating her to the “plains of Shinar” when the time is come. The “plains of Shinar” is another term for Babylon in scripture. Some speculate that while Rome was the center of the world power at the time of John’s writing, the literal city of government power will be Babylon at the end. There are so many different opinions about this, it is difficult to keep them all straight!

- We've now had several clues about the identity of the harlot: From these passages we can glean **10 big clues to the identification of the Harlot**: She:
 - 1) Is a **prostitute**. Ultimate in promiscuous, unfaithful behavior; depicts unfaithfulness to God on the part of someone who claims to honor God.
 - 2) Has **universal influence**; all over the world.
 - 3) Is **seated upon the beast** (Steers, dominates). She is in control, even over government at this point.
 - 4) Is **adorned with Purple, Scarlet, Gold and Jewels**. She is conspicuously wealthy and expensively adorned; outwardly attractive, with the adornment (vestments) of the organized "church."
 - 5) Holds a **Golden cup**: precious, shining, pleasant to behold; ostensibly a utensil in God's service; yet a counterfeit, filled with abominable things, making her "drunk" and will bring her judgment.
 - 6) Has writing on her, **Mystery, Babylon the Great**. A mystery, linked with Babylon of Nimrod (See Revelation 11:8, used as an idiom). Something not revealed before, shown now.
 - 7) Is the **Mother of Prostitutes**: This harlot has spiritual offspring. She is not alone. She has spawned other "harlots."
 - 8) Is a **Persecutor of Christians** (true believers). In fact, revels in their blood, drunk on persecution.
 - 9) Is **sitting on a best with seven heads**, which are identified as **Seven "mountains."** Rome built on seven hills; Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal and Viminal. It is possible that this may not be a direct reference to Rome, since the word used here can either be "mountain" or "hill" and may instead represent the earthly kingdoms that have come and gone in world history.
 - 10) Is **The Great City** that rules over the kings of the earth. In John's day, this could only be Rome. Rome was the birth place of the first organized Christianity, the Catholic Church. There is no question about this identity, which gives the previous clue a little more weight regarding Rome as the interpretation.

- We know at this point that **this harlot riding the beast is representative of the final one-world religion, a completely apostate, false religion**. Her roots go all the way back to the beginning of organized religion, and her corruption has continued to grow not only in the "mother harlot" church, but also in the many "daughter harlot" churches she has spawned. We cannot say that the harlot is the Catholic Church. Instead, she is the only church in the world at this time, and she is completely corrupt. She is the result of man's religious attempts, which are in complete opposition to God's call of true worship of Him. She is the combination of all man-made religions, all churches (*whether called Christian or otherwise*) in the last days. She began in Rome, as a manmade attempt to combine truth with error, true belief with paganism. She will end in total destruction, replaced by worship of the beast.

- Whether the "great city" spoken of in these passages is spiritual Rome (the Church) or physical Babylon is difficult to discern and remains to be seen.

- There are so many different interpretations of this chapter, in combination with Daniel 7, that it would take books to explain them. Well meaning Christians have tried to explain these things, but obviously they are beyond universal understanding at the moment.

NUTSHELL SUMMARY OF REVELATION 17 – TRYING TO UNRAVEL THE MYSTERY OF THE HARLOT RIDING THE BEAST

NOTE: Much is said here about the "Catholic" Church. This summary does not intend to accuse what we know today as the Catholic Church as being a "harlot," but it is true that throughout history this first "organized" Christian church meets all the clues given regarding the harlot riding the beast. It is probable that today's Catholic Church will abandon truth, morph and join with other world religions and apostate ideas, and become the harlot, the apostate church, referenced in Revelation 17. We anticipate one world religion during the Tribulation, and the world's largest religion will be a major player in this final false religion - but so will many, many others. We do not intend to offend anyone with these comments. Denomination does not matter - only true belief in Jesus Christ. This is what constitutes the true "Church."



1. Since the beginning of time, man's flesh side has been in opposition to God, and continues in this. **Scripture equates this rebellion to prostitution**, and calls all those who go after "other gods" harlots, whores, prostitutes. It is one of the most powerful types and symbols in scripture. God is a jealous God and requires our complete dedication and faithfulness. ANYTHING other than God as top priority is an idol, and our attention to it before God constitutes spiritual harlotry. Scripturally, anything that deviates from God's Word in practice or teaching is considered an abomination, and a form of spiritual fornication.
2. Nimrod was in rebellion to God, started Tower of Babel, began city of Babylon, which is cited throughout scripture as the **city in opposition to God**. All pagan, demonic and otherwise false religious rituals and teachings can be traced to origin in Babylon. The rituals associated with the Babylonian religious system were considered "mysteries" and secret rites.
3. The religious system begun in Babylon was moved first to Pergamum, then to Rome, where it was perpetuated by the Roman Emperors, who fully participated in the "mystery" rites. It was then combined with Christian teaching (under Constantine, 3rd century AD) to yield a world church that was not true to God's word and ways. It is called the Catholic (names means "universal") Church. It was corrupted by worldly and pagan teachings and rituals. **It was the first organized Christian religion, but full of abominations** (pagan ritual, etc.) Every one of the Catholic Church's rituals (including rosary, confession to priests, celibacy for priests, order of nuns, holy water, pomp and circumstance, etc.) can be traced to pagan beginnings in Babylon. This system continues today.

4. The **Catholic church has a very bloody history**, persecution of true believers, greed, lust for power and attempts to rule the world through the church. The Catholic Church has been the most powerful, longest lasting entity of all history, including all other world powers combined. It has a political agenda. This continues today but in a more subtle, and thus more deceptive way. **In every way, in all 10 of the clues provided for the identity of the harlot in chapter 17, the Catholic Church matches the description.**

5. The Catholic Church has spawned all the current (originally so-called “Christian”) churches today, in some form or another. This includes all religious systems, including protestants, Christian cults, new agers, mystics, etc. All of these contain false teachings, and pagan influences. **The Catholic Church is not alone in its “harlotry.”**

6. The only “Church” on the planet today that is acceptable in God’s eyes is the group of believers who hold true to Jesus Christ, God the Father, and His perfect plan and word. This group is not organized in man’s view of this word, but is led and guided by the Holy Spirit alone. These are the saints who have been persecuted throughout history by both the Catholic Church and other political and religious entities. This group also continues today, and has throughout all generations as God has preserved her.
True believers can most likely be found in all of these harlot religions, however. Some found there are less concerned with the ritual of the church, and most concerned with the relationship with Jesus Christ and God, relying upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Traditionalism and ritualism do not save people – Jesus does – and many, although they are “members” or attend what we might label as man-made religious groups, believe this, and know Jesus. God does not care what church we attend. He cares about what is in our hearts. The biggest question here for us is, are we loyal to our “church” (denomination, or whatever earthly group we belong to), or are we loyal to God alone? Our eternal destiny may very well depend on our answer to this question.

7. In the end times, a **religious system will arise that will depart completely from God’s teachings**. It may or may not spring from the Catholic Church, but that seems likely from our studies of Revelation. This will become a world religious system that opposes the truth of God’s Word, and relies heavily on pagan ritual, rather than God’s Word. It will persecute all other “religions” until they submit to her, or go underground. It will masquerade (as do all Satan’s lies) as the REAL religion, but it will be a lie and a deception, taking people away from God, not toward Him. It will be a “state sponsored” religion (at least in the beginning).

8. The world church will be the harlot of Revelation 17, riding the beast, which we know as the Antichrist and his world political system, for a time. **This harlot church will control and be supported by Antichrist, but only temporarily.** The Antichrist will not tolerate worship of anyone or anything other than himself at some point.

9. The beast has 7 heads and 10 horns. The **7 heads are most likely the 7 greatest world powers** through history: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome..and the last kingdom belonging to the Antichrist. (reference Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel, chapter 2, and Daniel’s vision in Chapter 7). The 10 horns indicate 10 kings and kingdoms (or regions of power) in the end times, before the Antichrist takes complete dominion. These 10 powers will eventually yield their power to Antichrist for a short time before the end. These kings and kingdoms have not yet happened.

10. The **7 kings mentioned in Chapter 17 relate to these 7 world powers.** It says 5 have fallen. Those would be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece. It also says one IS (at the time of John's writing), and that is the original Roman Empire (there is no other answer for this one). It is possible these 7 kings are also the seven "mountains" indicated immediately prior (v. 9 and 10), rather than the 7 "hills of Rome." God uses mountains as allusions to powerful kingdoms in scripture. This is up for debate. Either interpretation fits the overall bottom line of an apostate religious system sponsored by the Antichrist.
11. This chapter references the **beast (the Antichrist) as one who "was, and is not, and will ascend,"** and later as one who "was, and is not, is himself also the eighth..." This is a play on the description of Jesus (one who "was, and is, and shall be..."). It is Satan's counterfeit of truth. This may relate to the person (the king, Antichrist) or his kingdom (his world empire), or both. The words are interchangeable in the Greek. The "eighth" indicates that the Antichrist will come from the 7th world power, the one in place at end times, perhaps consisting of the 10 kings. He is then the eighth world power. The 10 kings will give the Antichrist their power, making him the sole dictator, thus an entirely new, or eighth, world kingdom. The description of "was, and is not, and will be" has given rise to all sorts of speculation. Speaking of only the kingdom, it may indicate that Roman imperialism rises again, after being "dead" for some time (remember, however, that it only completely died in 1918!), and then coming back to life for a short time. Speaking of the man himself, it may also be an allusion to the so-called "fatal wound" that the beast suffers, and then apparently comes back to life. Both may be true. This is often the case in prophecy. Some even speculate that a now dead world dictator (such as Nero or Hitler, or others), or even Judas Iscariot, will come back to life (reincarnated or resurrected?) as the final world ruler we call Antichrist. This seems a bit far fetched, and quite probably in violation of God's ways.
12. The harlot, the false church, will have control over all people, all nations, everywhere. Her deception will reach across the globe. Eventually, however, with the 10 kings, **the Antichrist will come to hate the false church (harlot)** because it takes away power and worship from him. They will destroy the harlot completely. She will not rise again. In her place, however, is an even more dangerous "religion" – worship of the Antichrist. Refusal to do so has fatal consequences. However, taking his mark and worshipping him has even MORE fatal consequences – complete separation from God for eternity.
13. During the Antichrist's rise, and in association first with the 10 kings mentioned, the world (both the false church and political system) **will engage the real believers, the saints, in war.** They will persecute the saints and kill many of them. Eventually, the Antichrist will be in sole command, and will continue and even step up this persecution of the saints. He is ultimately at war with God, and the Lamb (Jesus Christ). Chapter 17 deals mostly with Babylon (the harlot here) as a **religious deception – a false church.** Chapter 18 deals with Babylon as the entire world system (political, economical, social, commercial) under Antichrist. BOTH will be destroyed ultimately.
14. This chapter fast forwards to the end; however (chapter 19), where the Lamb returns with His saints (the real Church of true believers), Armageddon occurs, and the Lamb overcomes the enemy.

15. It is very possible that all these scriptures that relate to the antichrist, the false prophet and the harlot will only become crystal clear as they are happening in real time, or after the fact. We have mentioned before that the people who will have the greatest insights into the mysteries of the book of Revelation will be those who are living through the tribulation and are then able to put all the pieces together with the actual fulfillments. These chapters (17 and 18) have given rise to more speculation than just about any other scriptural passages. We must remember that we have great hindsight. Only God has foresight. When these events actually occur, they will make sense and be clear to those who are faithfully pursuing answers and truth in scripture.
16. However these passages are fulfilled, God has made it clear that **all these things will happen because He has a plan**, and all His Words will be fulfilled exactly as He has given them to us.

(Symbols and images from the European Union follow)



A WOMAN RIDES THE BEAST SYMBOLS IN EUROPE



Euro coins and stamps



German phone card

1948 German mark note



Cover of May 2000 Der Spiegel

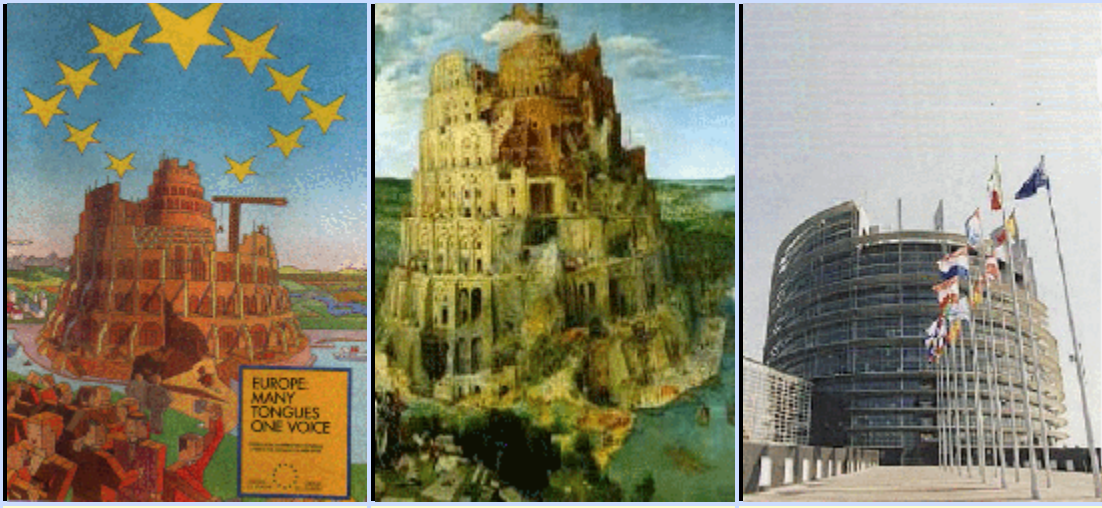


Sculpture outside the Council of Ministers in Brussels



TIME Magazine's article on United Europe

Tower of Babel Rebuilt



European Union Poster Many Tongues, One Voice

"Tower of Babel" Painting by Pieter Breugel

European Union Parliament Building