

Revelation 17

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written:

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

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

One of the seven angels:

Rev. 17: continuation of the chapters 15-16. Now in 17-19 described in more detail.

Vs. 3: Wilderness: desert. See desolate in vs. 16.

Woman on a scarlet beast: prostitute.

Compare to the New Jerusalem Rev. 21:24 : all the peoples of the earth will bring their glory into the New Jerusalem.

But here: all the wealth of the world, described as overdone. Wealth but not glory.

Beast with seven heads, ten horns:

see Rev. 13: first beast.

See coin of Vespasian: Woman sitting on seven mountains, with the sea-god at her feet and a beast beside her.

Now in Rev. 17: the woman sitting on the beast, with seven heads: the seven mountains of Rome. Rome connected to the sea through the Tiber river.

Name written on her forehead:

ROMA: reversed: AMOR.

AMOR: love, lust.



Name: Babylon the Great!

This name summarises all the evil from past and present. Jeremiah 50 and 51, Ezekiel 27 about Tyre: now applied to Rome.

Drunk with the blood of the saints

See 16:6 persecution, probably in the days of Nero.

Verses 7-8

But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The beast that you saw was, and is not.

This beast is the power of the state used for persecution.

Is not: persecution is not endless. God gives times of reprieve.

Vs. 8: 'and yet is' must be future: 'and will be.'

Verses 9-11

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.

Seven kings:

Not clear what is meant. Roman emperors? Successive empires (e.g. Daniel 2 and 7)?

Most logical explanation: seven is a fulness. With seven the end is coming. The eighth will be then the summary of all the previous powers. Here we are at six on a scale of seven.

Verses 12-14:

12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. 13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

Ten horns:

Receive authority with the beast. Different kingdoms and nations on this earth, who have authority but use their authority to support one common goal: rise up against God and His elect, to promote sexual immorality and anti-Christian ideologies.

Verses 15-18:

15 Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. 18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The waters

In the end, unity against the saints will not stand. The united world will become divided and turn against itself.

At the end it will happen in a great fashion when the entire world will unite against the Christians, which is symbolised in the eighth king, which the beast himself is according to verse 11.

This again shows that the entire creation is in God's hand. Whatever they do, they do because it is God's will. He is using all of them to fulfill His purpose.

Questions:

1. What does this chapter teach us about the wealth and prosperity of this world, the emphasis on economic growth, the constant push for higher wages, for the government to hand out money, etc.? How should we look at that: is it all bad or are there some good elements in it?
2. The world is united in its hatred against Christ and His people. This unity in hatred will not endure but in the end they will turn against themselves. Are we united in love and is it love that keeps us united to the end? What do we have to think about all the divisions among Christians?
3. In the past, certain cities were seen as the personification of evil: Babylon (Jeremiah 50 and 51), Tyre (Ezekiel 27), Rome. Should we be able nowadays to mention one or more cities which are leaders in the world and personify this evil in our time? If so, which cities would you mention?