

Chapter 17

In this Chapter, John ties together the pieces that we have discussed up to this point. I chose to not use this language to explain things because I wanted the study of Revelation to be progressive. For this reason, in the verbal explanation of our study, we will not dwell in any depth on the particular explanations although I will explain them here in writing in some detail.

The Scarlet Woman and the Scarlet Beast

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."

One of these Angels that has poured out those judgement bowls now approaches John and addresses him to explain his actions. The Angel has just come from battle and now wants to explain to John why he did what he did.

He stipulates that what just happened was "[the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters](#)". We can recollect from before that 'waters' means groups of people, so this woman stretches over a wide variety of different peoples/tribes/nations. In other words, it's world-wide or universal. We have also already established that a woman in Revelation represents a Church or body of believers, and for this group to be described as a 'harlot' we need to gain some understanding of what that characteristics means. We will try to be as respectful as possible here.

A 'harlot' or 'prostitute' is an individual who exchanges material gains for the use of their body. At this time it was seen as a necessary evil, but an ignoble one. The individual is not able to be overly selective about who they do business with as this profession is one of extreme competition for very shallow reasons. That means that, as time goes on, they must compromise more and more and entertain progressively less desirable clients, engaging in more degrading activities to keep their position or livelihood.

This particular prostitute worked "[on many waters](#)" indicating that it was not the general populace that she 'entertained' but it was rather "[with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication](#)". This Church/Religion made unholy and degrading alliances and dalliances with the leaders of the world and the result was that "[the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication](#)."

The belief structure that this Church convicted the Kings of the World to change to flowed through them down to their people, and the people; having nowhere else to turn for good water but to their leaders, drank deeply from their master's philosophy and became drunk in turn.

In an interesting way, this shifts blame away from the general populace, to some extent. They were only acting as good servants to their kings and their kings are the ones who worked with this woman. The harlot spread her influence over the many waters of the Earth and it was the leaders of the earth that chose to do business with her, and become influenced with her beastly philosophy.

Again, this is the Roman Church and can really be no other group/religion/power. Nothing else has had the wide-ranging influence that all the world has done business with. The only thing that comes close is the British Empire or present-day United States of America. Neither of these come close to the scope of the Roman Church and both have had their alternatives. The British Empire had both the French and Spanish as opponents throughout its height, while the US since its rise post-WW2, firstly had the USSR as a contender and in more recent years has had both China and Russia as a pseudo-opponent. Throughout its thousand-year dominion, the Roman Church did not have any serious contenders and even through the Schisms, there was a recognition of unity under different flags.

John's clear indication here is that this prostitute was who pushed these kings to go against their peoples best interests and the people followed somewhat blindly. We have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 how the people had little choice in following their leaders during the Medieval age and how this fits the history we have read quite well.

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.

So John is taken into vision by the Angel who wants to explain the situation and he is introduced to a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. Scarlet – a deep, rich red colour – is the colour of sin in the bible and Jewish culture. To describe the beast as a 'red' beast, it literally is defining the beast as the colour of sin. The woman is similarly arrayed in sinful colours, but also is wearing purple, the colour of royalty and power. This is a reflection of the previous inflection as, by committing fornication with the 'kings' of the earth, it was able to influence them, dominating them in some form.

The beast, "[full of names of blasphemy](#)" is described as having the same "[seven heads and ten horns](#)" as Daniel's 4th beast and the 1st Beast of Revelation 13; so we can easily say they are the same thing.

This, however, brings to the question of why there are 2 symbols for the same thing? If the Beast is Rome, and the Woman is the Roman Church, why are there 2 symbols for the same thing? The answer is that the Pope is both a King and a Religious leader. Although it has had a number of different versions, as a result of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, the Pope is recognised as the sovereign head of state of the 'Holy See'. The office of 'Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City' is elected along with the head of the Roman Church and Bishop of Rome and the offices are shared by the same person, making the Pope both a religious leader and secular leader at the same time. Incidentally, the Pope is the only absolute monarch remaining today, with his word being law within Vatican city.

The Papacy is, therefore, both a Church and a State, and can and is spoken of interchangeably. Wherever the Pope goes, he takes the sovereignty of Vatican City with him along with the governorship of the Roman Church. However this monster on which the woman sits has more to it as we shall read shortly.

The woman is arrayed in extremely fine jewels and cloth making her unquestionably wealthy. In her cup is said to be 2 things; "[abominations and the filthiness of her fornication](#)" and "[the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus](#)". The abominations she has made the kings of the earth do have resulted in the blood of saints and martyrs to Jesus' name being the drink she has become drunk on. This further reenforces everything we have discussed about the Papacy using its influence illegitimately to crusade against Christians and Sabbath Keepers.

On her forehead – where the Seals were planted in Rev 13, we find the clear reflection of who this woman is. She is the embodiment of the 'Babylonian Mysteries' and it is from this introduction of 'Mystery Babylon' that that name takes its rise. Such is the vileness of the distraction of the Babylonian Mysteries that the elements that make them up are said to be the 'Mother of' or rather the origin of all harlots and all abominations walking the earth. Every evil, John says, can find a start in her.

It's no wonder that John, when he saw this whore sitting on a monstrous beast was taken aback and thought it was a wonder he would never again see.

The Meaning of the Woman and the Beast

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. 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 mild chiding that John receives is quite interesting. The Angel, who understands what is going on, asks John what all the fuss is about; "Why did you marvel?" He says that he will explain what the story is all about. Now we're going to get the full story.

The language he uses about the beast is careful and needs some close interrogation.

"The beast that you saw was," it existed before John's time – about 100 AD

"and is not," But is not around at that moment

"and will ascend out of the bottomless pit" but will rise again in the future. The use of this phrase the "the bottomless pit" links this power to the location that Satan's forces were released from in Chapter 9. The power that was around was put into Satan's house but would be able to ascend at a later point in time.

When it does rise again, it will ascend to go to "perdition". This word in Greek, ἀπώλειαν (apōleian), generally means an utter destruction; the type from which you cannot recover. It does not mean an eternal destruction like the Catholic view of Hell, but an absolute destruction like Babylon had already experienced by this point. As discussed previously, Babylon was, by this point, little more than a ruin and almost uninhabitable; never to recover.

John is told that the people living on earth, whose names are **not** written in the Book of Life, even from the very foundation of the world, will marvel when they see the beast. The angel that chided John when he asked "Why did you marvel?" indicates that John was actually admiring the woman rather than just wondering about its power. The word here translated 'marvel' is ἐθαύμασα (ethaumasa) occurs 44 times in the bible, generally to mean to be 'amazed', 'wonder' or 'admire' something powerful going on. John was obviously not just amazed by what he saw, but was actually admiring the woman and her influence over the beast. The Angel is clearly

saying that this power is one that will be admired/worshiped/supported by those "whose names are not written in the Book of Life".

John adds one other quality to this power; he describes it as "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is". This is an extremely curious way of phrasing things and can be interpreted in several different ways.

Firstly, we can contrast this with the description of God, clearly describing this as an ungodly power. In Revelation 1, John twice describes God as the one "who is and who was and who is to come" while this "beast ... was, and is not, and yet is". To understand this, we must go back to the context of 100AD; the Roman Empire had just destroyed the Jewish nation but the Christians were spreading far and fast. In the light of Jesus' crucifixion around 65 years earlier, God's power was spreading far and wide, and the church had not corrupted itself like it would. Babylon's influence was not in the Christian church yet.

Secondly, in the same style, while Satan had dominated the world up to this point, the fact that Jesus had arrived exactly on time according to Daniel's timing, God had taken control of events. Satan had the majority of influence over the powers that **were** in control of events before Jesus' was on the earth, but his walking around on the earth built the Christian movement in his wake. It would not take long for Satan to move back into dominion over the Christians and, subsequently, corrupt the movement, but at the time John was writing, Satan was not in absolute control.

Thirdly, we can look at the Roman Religion. Unlike the other powers; Egypt, Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece, Rome did not develop its own religion but rather unashamedly adapted the system of Gods that its neighbours worshiped to their own needs. They modified some of the structures but, although their believes were extremely devout, Religion was more a matter of politics and show for the Romans and not so much for Philosophical expansion. That was considered a 'Greek' trait. So the religious fervour that pre-existed Rome would also come after Rome, but did not exist during Rome's time. This also is reflected in the 'cult' of the emperors, which were seen as political shows rather than the genuine worship of other powers.

As if to further reenforce the point that this beast is not one single power, but evolves over time, he goes on to explain further.

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.

The Angel clearly states that the 7 Heads of the beast represent 2 things at the same time. The way that the 7 'mountains' are referenced most likely connects it to the "many waters" in verse 1; but could also refer itself to the 7 hills of Rome we discussed in Chapter 12. More importantly, the Angel says that it refers to 7 Kings. As we have established ad infinitum, this power refers to a wide timeframe which indicates that these 7 Kings are 7 powers that God's people interact with. The fact that they "go to perdition" gives us some scope for determining who they are. By the time John wrote his book, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece had all dominated God's people and, in turn, been destroyed. Egypt and Assyria predated Daniel's prophecy and Media, the power that was referenced in Daniel, did not interact with God's people extensively and was absorbed by Persia too smoothly for it to be said that it was 'destroyed'. These 5 powers all developed their own mythological systems mostly independently of each other, although they did have several similarities and all fall under the general category of 'pagan'. Imperial Rome, also called Pagan Rome, as we discussed, did not build its own religion but adopted from all that went before it, so it clearly "is". The final power in the 7 is a future power from John's perspective that we have already identified with Papal Rome.

Papal Rome, the 1st Beast of Revelation 13, clearly exercised all the powers of the previous religious structures and the combined power of Imperial Rome through its establishing the Holy Roman Empire. As we discussed widely, it arose around 200 years after John wrote his book so is clearly a power 'to come'; a future power.

The Angel then gets very cryptic, expanding our understanding of the beast. "The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth," The Angel indicates that the beast itself is an 8th Power. The 7 Heads represent 7 powers but the beast itself then constitutes an 8th Power. He goes on to say that this beast "is of the seven, and is going to perdition." After the fall of the 7th power – that is after the deadly wound is inflicted in the Papacy – one of the previous powers will rise back up before it to is entirely destroyed. This mirrors our discussion of the 'Beast from the Earth' and the image it creates in Chapter 13. The power will arise as a renewed but reinvented form of the pagan powers that had pestered God's people for generations.

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."

Again, returning to our conversations both of Daniel's 4th Beast, and Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, the 10 kings are the 10 states that broke up the Roman Empire. As the Empire broke up, they progressively turned their support to the Papacy and challenged the true people of God through crusades and oppression at the instruction of the Roman influence. We don't need to review these, this has been heavily discussed.

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."

We have widely discussed that waters represent groups of people, large and small. But the Angel says that that 10 horse will turn on the harlot and wipe her out, destroying her and burning her with fire. This reinforces what we discussed when looking at the 6th bowl of Judgment, the drying up of the River Euphrates. Obviously the world will turn on the Papacy and will destroy her power before eliminating her as a power and an institution.

Why would the people turn on the church in this way? The Angel explains that "God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose". He has a limited time during which the Kings will "give their kingdom(s) to the beast" but when "the words of God are fulfilled" then the time has come for them to turn back to God. As if to reinforce this distinction, the Angle reiterates by saying that "the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

To review

To be extremely clear, beast is the militant power that supports the woman; the religious structure. The Babylonian Mysteries, in so many different forms, have influenced the powers that interacted with God's people in a variety of different ways and have attempted to destroy them. They are the vehicle of Satan's attacks on both the Jews and Christians.

Starting with Babylon's close ally and the power that it shared mathematic and philosophical knowledge with; Egypt, God's people have been oppressed, repressed or suppressed by all of the powers named. The Egyptians first enslaved the Israelites

before they were released from their bondage by Moses. The establishment of the kingdoms of Judea and Israel gave a solid ground for the Jews to exist in before they turned against God. The Assyrians hammered the Jews before the Babylonians were finally permitted to again enslave them. Their captivity was continued for a time under Persian rule before their return as a Vassal state was permitted. As we recall, the Babylonian Religion was passed from Babylon to Pergamum when the Greeks next took the world stage. Daniel Chapter 11 gives extensive detail on the interactions between God's People and the Greek states before the Romans finally came into the picture. The Romans themselves accepted the Babylonian Mysteries as an inheritance but cared little for Religious matters which permitted Constantine the Great to finally change Rome's religion over to a pseudo-Christian one. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the Papacy itself stepped forward as the 7th power wielding a mighty sword through its absolute dominion in religious matters. But this only lasted 1,260 years until Berthier conquered the Pope and forced his exile. Now we stand in that space between the empires, with a Roman Church still spreading its blasphemy waiting for its wound to be healed and a new power, a much greater military force but one that is no less religiously minded, will arise and turn the entire world to its will. That power will fall to Christ alone at his Glorious second coming, when all those whose names are written in the book of life will receive their reward for their lives of service and faith.