

Mystery Babylon

Revelation 17

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The Scarlet Woman and the Scarlet Beast

Revelation 17:1-6

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.*

v1 – Who or what is being judged here?

The great harlot who sits on many waters

Who is this great harlot?

- The Great harlot represents the religious system that serves as a substitute for worshiping God... idolatry; worshiping things created rather than the Creator
- It includes Satan's doctrines of demons that lure people away from a relationship with the true God

What idolatrous religions come to mind that are in practice today?

- Islam - worships a demon-inspired concept of God
- Apostate Christianity (salvation by works) - worships a human concept of God based on the opinion of men rather than God's Word
- Humanism - worships man as god, "government is our savior"

What does it mean that the great harlot sits on many waters?

- Waters make up the sea which symbolically represents the gentile nations in Revelation (see Rev 17:15 for example)
- Apparently, the term many waters involves a subset of the gentile nations... maybe Western Civilization?
- So, this refers to idolatrous religion that is embraced by the gentile nations of the world

v2 – What did this great harlot do?

Committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made their people drunk... dulled their senses; rendered them unable to think right

Why is fornication used to describe the practice of this idolatrous religion?

As fornication pertains to sexual immorality; practicing an idolatrous religion pertains to spiritual immorality.

What is the wine of her fornication?

It is what dulls the senses of people... false doctrine, ritual instead of relationship, government taking over what churches should be doing...

v3 – How is the great harlot described?

A woman riding a red beast with seven heads and 10 horns

What is this beast?

Clearly the government of the Antichrist...

Revelation 13:1 refers to this beast with 7 heads and 10 horns.

What do the seven heads represent?

The seven heads are described in revelation 17:10... these are the nations that have ruled the world from Jerusalem's perspective: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon. Medo- Persia, Greece, Rome, Ottoman Empire.

What do the 10 horns represent?

The 10 kings who rule the world and will yield their sovereignty to the Antichrist.

Why is the beast described as being scarlet?

Red represents blood and sin... a lot of death and immorality is associated with the government of the Antichrist

What is significant about the beast being full of names of blasphemy?

Satan and the Antichrist hate God so they embrace everything that defames God.

What is significant about the Apostle John being taken to the wilderness to have this vision?

The wilderness is away from civilization; where the wild creatures live. The harlot riding the beast is far from where everyone wants to be... liberals think they are creating a utopia when they oppose God but they end up creating hell on earth instead.

v4 – How was the harlot described?

- Purple - the color of wealth and royalty
- Scarlet - also responsible for great deaths (the False Prophet is the one who institutes the Image and Mark of the Beast system for rooting out all refuse to worship the Antichrist)
- Gold, precious stones, pearls —wealthy by the world's standards

What is her cup full of abominations?

Deception, error, doctrines that oppose God and His Word

v5 – Why is the harlot called Mystery Babylon the great?

Babel is where mystery-laden idolatrous religions began... there is nothing new under the sun; all of man's religions are attempts to make their own way to God just as the Tower of Babel was.

What does mystery have to do with these idolatrous religions?

- They all involve religious leaders who claim special knowledge unknown to the general population and they use this to wield power over the people.
- Their doctrine of salvation through human effort gives the religions leaders power over people because they get to define what works earn favor with God.

How is Mystery Babylon the mother of harlots?

The original Tower of Babel religion spawned many religions by different names but had the same idolatrous doctrine of demons... that people can earn salvation through good works.

v6 – What is the condition of the Mystery Babylon harlot?

Rendered senseless by the blood of the saints which she is instrumental in martyring.

What saints is this talking about?

The tribulation saints... yes, the progeny of Mystery Babylon have killed God's People since the beginning but this specifically pertains to the Great Harlot that rides the beast.

Why do you think John marveled at this vision?

He might have been amazed that God would allow such an abomination.

Why would God allow such an abomination as Mystery Babylon to plague mankind?

God created people with a need to worship... if people refused to worship Him, they will naturally end up worship a substitute thus they need the harlot Mystery Babylon.

The meaning of the Woman and the Beast Revelation 17:7-18

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. 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. 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." 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."

v7 – Why do you think the angel told John not to marvel?

Because he is there to clear up the mystery for him by revealing what will become of the woman and the beast

v8 – What does it mean that the beast was and is not?

I take it that it existed in the past and the time is coming when it will exist no more.

How is it that the beast ascended from the bottomless pit?

- Among of the consequences of the beast coming on the scene during the Tribulation is that demons which were confined to the abyss for their evil deeds during Noah's day are released to afflict people.
- Satan is behind all idolatrous religions & he is the ruler of the demons from the abyss (Rev 9:11).
- While it is the doctrines of demons that make the beast possible, people readily embrace them because it provides them with the alternative to worshipping God that they have chosen.

Where is it that the beast is headed?

Perdition... all who make the beast what it is will spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Who else will marvel and why?

- Earth dwellers (anti-God materialists) will marvel at the beast.
- They have been deceived by the beast into thinking that embracing the beast is the right thing to do... it is so awesome...
Rev 13:4 – *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

How is it that the earth dwellers are not written in the Book of Life?

They have not been born again and thus not destined to spend eternity in heaven.

How can it be that the names in the Book of Life were there from the foundation of the world?

God is outside the confines of time and He knows who will respond to the faith He gives us to believe.

v9-10 – What additional information is given here about the heads of the beast?

The mountains symbolize that this is referring to rulers; a mountain is a common symbol in the Bible for kingdoms...

Dan 2:35 – *the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*

The heads = mountains = kings who succeed one another.

v11 – What do we learn of the beast here?

The beast has characteristics of the 7 regimes that preceded it and becomes the eighth king in succession.

What will become of this 8th king?

He will go the way of all who embrace his kingdom: perdition (the lake of fire).

v12 – What are the ten horns?

They are the 10 rulers over the earth who have authority for a short time (one hour).

v13 – What do these 10 rulers do?

- They pretty much agree with-the Antichrist so much that they yield their sovereignty to him.
- Indeed, this is necessary in order to have a global government.

v14 – What else do the ten kings do?

They will oppose Christ

What will become of the ten kings?

Jesus will overcome them when He returns.

Why will the Lord prevail over the ten kings?

He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Who will be with Jesus when He returns?

The called, chosen and faithful... His followers in the church.

v15 – What are the waters upon which Mystery Babylon sits?

- "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues"... the Gentile nations
- Michael Savage: nations are defined by borders, language and culture
Acts 17:26 – *And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, (NKJ)*

v16 – What will the 10 kings who rule with the Antichrist do?

They will hate the religious system that rides the world governmental system and will eventually turn on her...

- Make her desolate - no one will gather to honor her
- Naked - expose her for what she is... a false religion
- Eat her flesh - consume her; incorporate her into their government (no more separation of church and state)
- Burn her - destroy her; she will be no more

v17 – Why will the 10 kings do what they do?

God will cause the 10 rulers to act such as His will be done. (God is in control)

v18 – how else is Mystery Babylon described?

A great city (system, creation of man) that rules over the kings of the earth... no wonder they end up destroying her; they are rebellious by nature.

What is the blessing in what is revealed here about Mystery Babylon?

- The false religions of mankind and fallen angels will end... and along with that the persecution of the saints.
- God is Almighty and in control... He even uses those opposed to Him to serve His purposes.