

# Revelation Chapter Seventeen

- The next two chapters (17 and 18) after the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl has been poured out are apocalyptic panorama.
- Chapter 17 highlights the Harlot – religious Babylon.
  - The Harlot sits on many waters which means she has an affect on people all over the earth [17:1, 15].
  - God warned His people Israel against spiritual harlotry [Ex 34:12-16] although they did not obey His instruction [Num 25:1-3; Jer 2:20-23a; Ezek 16:15-34].
  - The Great Harlot [17:1] and Mother of all Harlots [17:5] is a religious system that has spread all over the world, drawing people away from the true worship of God.
  - The kings of the earth commit adultery with the Harlot meaning that they take part in the religious system which she represents [17:2].
  - The earth dwellers (unbelievers) get caught up in this religious system and are made drunk with her spiritual harlotries [17:2].
  - The Harlot rides the Beast [17:3 cp. 13:1] at first, although the Beast will come to oppose the Harlot.
  - The Harlot is dressed in religious attire and holds a golden cup of abominations she uses to seduce unbelievers into spiritual drunkenness [17:4].
  - The full title for the Harlot is a mystery, “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth” [17:5].
    - The golden cup of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar is still a tool of this mystery Babylon [Jer 51:6-7].
    - When Cyrus lead Persia to victory over Babylon, the Babylonian political system ceased to exist, but the religious system of Babylon survived as seen in Pergamos [Rev 2:12-14] and eventually Rome.
    - At the time of Babel [Gen 10:8-10], the promised redeemer was the “Seed of the Woman” [Gen 3:15].
    - Because Satan was aware of this, the religious system of Babylon featured a mother goddess and baby son.
    - The Queen of Heaven religion spawned by Babel was Judah’s downfall during the time of Jeremiah’s ministry [Jer 7:18; 44:17-19, 24-25].

- This mother goddess worship has existed for many years in many places under many names.
  - Ishtar and Tammuz – ancient Babylon
  - Isis and Osiris – Egypt
  - Aphrodite and Adonis – Greece
  - Cybele and Attis – Asia Minor
  - Ceres and Jupiter – Rome
- When Constantine declared Christianity to be legal in Rome, the followers of the Babylonian religious system adopted the names Mary and Jesus to lend legitimacy to the Queen of Heaven religion.
- Ever since Bishop Damasus adopted the Babylonian title of Supreme Pontiff in 378 A.D., the Queen of Heaven religion has found its home within the Roman Catholic Church (see handout).
  - The Caesars held the title of Supreme Pontiff after Julius Caesar became Pontifex Maximus in 63 A.D.
  - Damasus took the title after when the Roman Emperor Gratian refused it on the basis of his Christian faith.
- After the Rapture of the Church takes the believers out of the world, the Roman Catholic Church will be able to expand its already significant influence over unbelievers during the chaos which ensues.
- Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has shown a propensity for becoming involved in political arenas and attaining power and influence.
  - Pope Leo I (440-461 A.D.) gained power when Rome could not effectively handle Attila the Hun.
  - Pope Gregory I (590-604 A.D.) enjoyed great influence after defending Rome against the Lombards.
- The Harlot herself is drunk with the blood of the saints [17:6] indicating that Roman Catholicism will oppose true evangelism during the Tribulation.
- When John begins to wonder about what he has seen, the angel explains the mystery [17:7].
  - The beast was, and is not, and is to come which refers to his death and resurrection [17:8 cp. 13:3, 12-14].
  - To understand this verses which follow, we must remember the lion, bear and leopard attributes of this beast that show it to be the culmination of the Gentile empires [Rev 13:2 cp. Dan 7:4-6; Dan 2:31-45].

- The seven heads are mountains [17:9] and kings [17:10] which are kingdoms associated with religious Babylon.
  - These kings appear to reign sequentially.
  - The five that “have fallen” are most likely Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece which all opposed Israel and had fallen at the time John is writing Revelation.
  - The “one that is” would then be historical Rome which was afflicting Israel during John’s time.
  - The one which “has not yet come” is eschatological Rome – the revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist.
- The Beast springs out of the seven kingdoms and, thus, is a product of the revived Roman empire [17:11].
- The ten horns are kingdoms that are all around at the time of the Harlot and the Beast and receive power with the Beast [17:12].
- They turn over their sovereignty to the Beast [17:13] in accordance with God’s sovereign plan [17:17].
- These kingdoms will be overcome by the Lord [17:14].
- Even though the Harlot and the Beast cooperate for awhile [17:3, 18], these kingdoms join with the Beast to destroy the Harlot [17:16] in order for the Beast/False Prophet to set up an all-inclusive religious, economic and political system [2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:11-17].