

Revelation 17:1-18

A. The Mother of Prostitutes (17:1-5)

1. “Come”—to show him the judgment; just as the spirit will call him to see the bride (21:9).
2. Prostitute—intoxicated the nations with her immorality—drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6). Cannibalism. Heads, horns and blasphemous names link the beast with the dragon and an earlier version of the dragon.
3. OT—often portrayed Israel as a woman—either as a faithful bride when pure (Isa. 54:5-6) or as adulteress when unfaithful (Isa. 1:21).
4. Revelation contrasts Jerusalem the bride with Babylon the prostitute (17:5; 21:2).
5. OT—Nineveh called a prostitute—evil world empire (Nahum 3:4).
6. Homeland or one’s ancestry personified as a woman. “God Bless America”—*stand beside her and guide her through the night with the light from above.*
7. Babylon – symbolic of Rome—place on the seven hills (17:9). The new Babylon—Rome.
8. “kings of the earth”—who have committed adultery with the prostitute (17:2) will suffer. Kings referring to the client-rulers who ruled their people as local agents of Roman authority (c.f, 17:12, 16, 18).
9. Babylon—women dressed in scarlet and purple—dressed to kill; purple—wealth; her gold; precious stones, pearls—picture of wealth; contrast to the city of God with streets of gold, gates of pearls precious stones on its foundations (21:18-21).
10. True wealth does not come through conquest, buying or selling but from relinquishing worldly wealth for the promises of Jesus (3:17-18).
11. Wearing name on the forehead—Roman prostitutes wore names on a headband—Baukman, *Climax of Prophecy*.

B. Seven Heads As Mountains and Kings (17:6-11)

1. As Rome made other nations drunk with immorality (17:2), she became drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6). Drinking blood—horrible image for Jews.
2. Rome’s identity confirmed by a). woman sitting on seven hills b). The leader of Babylon apparently Nero. c). “kings of the earth” d). “Babylon” standard term for Rome by this period.
3. Nero—13:18—overcomes the mortal wound.
4. The King who is—Domitian—if the early church tradition is accurate in its dating of Revelation. Five kings back include Nero. 8th king will emerge as the new ruler (c.f. 13:3).

C. Ten Horns (17:12-18)

1. Ten horns—from Daniel 7:7, 20, 24—Ten kings. Are they from the East? Client kingdoms who will rule with the beast for only one hour but ultimately give their power to the beast.
2. Roman King thought he was the “king of kings” but Rev. 17:14—the beast will be defeated by the King of kings and the Lord of lords—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”
3. God works evil against evil to destroy evil. Revelation 17: 17ff.

D. Bridging the Text:

Warning: American immorality.

Judgment comes to those who participate in others’ sin.