



FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVELATION 17:8-18. Woman and Scarlet Beast (part 2)

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

REVELATION 17 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

17 Doom of Babylon (cont)

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, 10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. 11

The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. 12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

Victory for the Lamb

14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

15 And he *said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Enduring Word Commentary: **Revelation 17:8-18 The Fall of Religious Babylon (part 2)**

A. The concept of Babylon.

B. The great harlot (religious Babylon) is described. (1-6)

C. The great harlot is interpreted. (7-15)

1. (7) The angel tells John that the harlot will be explained to him.

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.

a. I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her: The focus of the explanation is on the **beast**. It appeared that the harlot ruled (*rode*) the Antichrist’s system, but he is the dynamic factor, using her as tyrants have always used religion – as a mere tool to accomplish their purposes.

2. (8) The beast carrying the woman is plainly connected with the beast of Revelation 13.

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.

3. (9) Seven mountains associated with the beast.

“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

a. The seven heads are seven mountains: Many quickly associate the **seven mountains** with Rome and the Papacy, because Rome is well known as the city on seven hills. Yet literally, the Greek word means **mountains**, not *hills*.

i. Many commentators – especially those who see all of Revelation fulfilled in history – regard the **seven mountains** as an irrefutable connection with Rome. Clarke is a good example of this when he writes, “This verse has been almost universally considered to allude to the seven hills upon which Rome originally stood.”

ii. But in the Bible mountains are sometimes a figure of governments (such as in [Daniel 2:35](#)) and the city of Rome is built on hills, not mountains.

b. The seven heads are seven mountains: It is probably better to see the **seven mountains** as representing the seven kings and kingdoms described in [Revelation 17:10](#). Many people find the connection between religious Babylon and Roman Catholicism irresistible, yet it is flawed in the sense that there is no doubt that religious Babylon will incorporate a strong Roman Catholic element, but it will be *much bigger* than Roman Catholicism.

i. Tendencies for Roman Catholicism’s ultimate partnership with a one-world religion were evident in Pope John Paul II’s bizarre involvement with and approval of other anti-Christian religions.

ii. In addressing a “prayer gathering” of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others, Pope John Paul II told participants that their efforts were

“unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a new climate of peace.” The Pope pledged that “the Catholic Church intends to ‘share in and promote’ such ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation.”

iii. The *Catholic Review* commented on this and said, “The unity of religion promoted by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not a goal to be achieved immediately, but a day may come when the love and compassion which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently will unite the world in a common effort to save humanity from senseless destruction, and lead toward the light in which we all believe.”

4. (10) Seven kings and kingdoms.

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.

a. **Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come:** This is one of the more difficult passages in the Book of Revelation. Some explain these **seven kings**, five past, one present, and one to come in the succession of Roman Emperors in John’s era, but there are many historical difficulties with this approach. More likely, it is a reference to:

- **Five have fallen** refers to the five world empires before John’s day: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greece
- **One is** refers to the world empire of John’s day: Rome
- **The other has not yet come** refers to the one world empire to come: a revival of the Roman Empire

b. **When he comes, he must continue a short time:** This seventh will quickly be taken over by an eighth – and will become the state of the Antichrist ([Revelation 17:11](#)).

i. There are problems with this viewpoint as well (so some have taken the seven as symbolic). This plainly is a difficult passage!

5. (11) The beast (the Antichrist) is clearly identified as the eighth king.

And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

a. **Is himself also the eighth:** He is of the **seven** in the sense that he shares characteristics with all previous world empires, but his fate is clear. **Perdition** means “destruction,” and the **beast** will be destroyed.

6. (12-15) Ten kings to come, allies of the Antichrist.

“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. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 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.” Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

a. **Ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet:** This probably alludes to a ten-nation confederation (as in the toes of the [Daniel 2:24-45](#) image), but some take **ten** as a symbolic number.

i. “They are ten kingdoms which shall arise out of the fourth great kingdom there: ten European powers, which in the last time, in concert with and subjugation to the antichristian power, shall make war against Christ. In the precise number and form here indicated, they have not yet arisen... What changes in Europe may bring them into the required tale and form, it is not for us to say.” (Alford, 1866)

b. **These are of one mind:** Many have seen the European Union (formerly the European Economic Community) as the potential fulfillment of this. Perhaps, but now there are more than ten nations in this revived European power, and more on the way.

i. There is little doubt the EU itself claims to be a successor to the ancient Roman Empire. The EEC started in 1957, when six European nations met to talk about combining their nuclear, coal, and economic resources. They met together in Rome and signed the treaty of Rome – the beginnings of the present EU. In many places in Europe, the EU flag is just as prominent as any national flag.

ii. We could still say what Alford wrote in 1866: “In the precise number and form here indicated, they have not yet arisen... What changes in Europe may bring them into the required tale and form, it is not for us to say.” But it *will* happen, and this confederation of nations will emerge as an heir to the ancient Roman Empire.

c. **These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast:** Whatever their exact identity, their actions are clear. They join with the Antichrist in the war against Christ, in the battle alluded to in the sixth and seventh bowls ([Revelation 16:12-21](#)).

d. **The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits:** The harlot presides over **peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**. This tells us that the harlot’s influence is worldwide, through her connection to the beast. This will be a truly one-world religion.

i. The interpretation of the harlot focuses on her relation to the beast: she is utterly connected to the beast and his government. If this sounds unthinkable, remember that throughout history, religion – not true Christianity – has often been the willing servant and supporter of tyrants.

D. The great harlot is judged. (16-18)

1. (16) Antichrist’s allies turn on the great harlot.

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.

a. **These will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire:**

This violence probably takes place at the mid-point of the tribulation period. Here, apostate religion discovers the true nature of the beast.

i. Ultimately, the Antichrist will not tolerate any worship except of himself: *The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God* ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#)).

b. **Burn her with fire:** Once his power has been consolidated, the Antichrist no longer needs the help of religious Babylon. He will then work to dismantle and destroy her and her one-world religion.

i. This has always been the goal of tyrants – and most politicians – to *use* religion for their purposes, then discard it.

2. (17) God's hand ultimately directs all this.

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.

a. **God has put it into their hearts:** God directed the judgment against religious Babylon. God will sometimes use a wicked group (here, the ten kings) to be an instrument of His judgment against another wicked group (here, religious Babylon).

b. **To be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast:** God will ordain the political support of these ten kings for the Antichrist. God will give the world just what it wants: godless religion and godless rulers.

3. (18) The great harlot is identified with Rome.

And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

a. **That great city:** In John's day, there was no doubt which city **reigns over the kings of the earth**. Rome was the political, economic, and religious center of the world of that time.

i. But *Babylon* – in the sense of the world system – has always been **that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth**. The question for Christians is, "Does it reign over me? Or am I the citizen of a better city, the Jerusalem above?" ([Galatians 4:26](#))

b. **That great city:** Again, the association of this harlot – of religious Babylon – with Rome doesn't mean that the Roman Catholic Church is identical to religious Babylon, though apostate Roman

Catholics will definitely be a part of this great harlot.

i. "It is most direct in Paganism; but it is in Mohammedanism, in Papalism, in the degenerate Catholicism of the Eastern churches, and in all the heretical isms, infidelities, and mere goodishness which afflict our Protestant Christianity as well." (Seiss)

c. **That great city:** Rather, Rome was the ready personification of Babylon – the world in rebellion against God – in John's day. Today, idolatry is just as strong, but more dispersed. Today, which city in the world is most readily identified with the world system? Hollywood? Wall Street? Washington?

©1996–present *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary*
by David Guzik –