



# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## *“Lethalized Prostitution”*

17:1-5

### Introduction

In the Bible a “mystery” is something that was previously *concealed* but is now being *revealed*.

There is just such a “mystery” being revealed in chapter seventeen. The harlot John describes and discusses has on her forehead a name written:

MYSTERY  
BABYLON THE GREAT  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS  
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS  
OF THE EARTH

In verse seven an angel says to John, “I will **show** you the **mystery** of the woman...” The harlot is a mystery being revealed.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is “rendered into signs” in order to *clarify*, not to *confuse*. The signs and symbols are clearly identified

either in the book itself or elsewhere in the Bible. This chapter is no exception.

Chapter seventeen is not without difficulty, but its major teaching is clear to all literal interpreters of the Bible.

Before we begin our verse-by-verse look through this chapter, it will be helpful to overview several important attributes of this woman who rides the beast:

►► Part of the mystery being revealed is that she *the Mother of Harlots*.

She is called a “harlot” in verse one, and the “mother” of other “harlots” in verse five. Her “fornication” is with the “kings” and kingdoms of the “earth.” This tells us that we are dealing with spiritual things; she is a *spiritual* harlot, and the mother of other *spiritual* harlots.

A spiritual harlot is someone or some group that is unfaithful to God by practicing things that are unbiblical while claiming to be orthodox.

Her harlotry began with “Babylon.” Babylon was known for its elaborate system of religion that was in defiance to the God of heaven. The city of Babylon was the original site of the Tower of Babel. “Babel” means *gateway to the gods*. The tower was not a physical attempt to reach God; it was a spiritual attempt to replace God with the worship of other gods.

God disrupted the rebellion by confusing the languages of the people. As they dispersed around the world, they took with them the Babylonian religion. Biblically, then, **all the religions of the world have elements of Babylon in them** - right up to our present day! **This** is why Babylon is the harlot who is the “mother” of other harlots.

►► Another part of the mystery being revealed is that she *seeks to be Master of kings and kingdoms*.

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She is described in verse one as sitting “on many waters.” In verse fifteen the angel tells John that the waters are “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” The “beast” she rides has “seven heads and ten horns.” They are defined by the angel as past, present, and future kingdoms of the world. The woman is a religious system that seeks to dominate and rule kings and kingdoms.

►► Another part of the mystery being revealed is that she *claims to be the Minister of God*.

In verse four she is all decked-out as a priestess, having in her hand a “golden cup,” which is a utensil used in religious service. But although she claims to be the minister of God, she is in fact the murderer of the true saints of God; she is “drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

►► A final part of the mystery being revealed is that *her power is centered in a particular Municipality*.

The “seven heads” of the beast upon which she sits are , in verse nine, “seven mountains on which the woman sits.” In the Bible “mountains” can be a symbol of kings or kingdoms; but in verse ten the angel says these “mountains” are **also** “seven kings.” In other words, the mountains have two meanings: in verse nine they represent a location with seven mountains *and* in verse ten they represent seven kings.

Is there a city of seven mountains? Throughout recorded history Rome has been known as the city of the seven mountains, or hills; they even each have names. John would understand the angel to be referring to Rome.

Pulling all this preliminary information together author and apologist Dave Hunt writes:

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The woman in Revelation 17 can only be Rome/Vatican City. No other *city* built on seven hills wields such authority, exchanging ambassadors with *nations*. Nor does any other city claim to represent Christ, and thus no other could stand accused of spiritual fornication due to unholy alliances with earth's rulers. Neither can any other city rival the blood of both Jews and Christians which pagan Rome and later the Vatican have shed. Thomas Hobbes perceptively said, "The Papacy is...the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."

Here is what was being revealed to John in this chapter:

The ancient religion of Babel is a system of false religion that has seeded false religions throughout human history. In a time future to John, such a system of false religion will dominate kings and kingdoms from its headquarters in Rome. And it will take the lead in the brutal persecution and murder of the Jews and of the true saints of Jesus on the earth.

This is why all of the Protestant Reformers identified the Roman Catholic Church as the woman who rides the beast.

It has become common among evangelicals to desire unity with the Roman Catholic Church. Let me say this: Roman Catholic doctrine is unbiblical at best. Though we may share things in common, the most important things are at odds. The Reformation was a real historical response to genuine errors and falsehoods regarding the very basic tenets of biblical truth. Roman Catholic doctrine has not changed for the better since then.

It may be unpleasant to say these things, but history has verified John's report. The Roman Catholic Church *is* heavily influenced by ancient pagan practices; it *has* dominated kings and kingdoms from its headquarters in Rome; and it *is* responsible for brutally murdering more true believers than **any** other group in the history of the world.

As you read the chapter you realize that some form of this same harlot will continue into the Great Tribulation. She will again, for a

short time, rule over kings and kingdoms from her headquarters in Rome; she will again brutally murder God's true saints on the earth.

Revelation 17:1 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,

Chapter sixteen was an overview of the final judgment of God upon the earth, culminating with the Second Coming of Jesus. It mentioned the destruction of Babylon. Chapters seventeen and eighteen pause to tell you what Babylon is:

- Chapter seventeen describes it as a religious system.
- Chapter eighteen describes it as a real city.

There are some excellent scholars see the woman only as the Church of Rome. They say the only city involved is Rome. Others acknowledge the harlot based in Rome but argue that Babylon, the city, will again be rebuilt on its ancient site. That's what I think.

So there is a religious system whose capital is Rome and there is a real city, the world capital, which is Babylon rebuilt on its original site.

She is a "harlot" because she seduces people from the love of God.

We said the "many waters" are nations and peoples of the world. Remember the first time you realized that Vatican City is considered a sovereign state? Unlike any other city on the earth the Vatican is acknowledged as a sovereign state, separate and distinct from the nation of Italy surrounding it.

Revelation 17:2 "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

This is a summary statement describing an unholy alliance between the harlot and individual earthly governments. Any accurate history of Roman Catholicism and its union with earthly governments could have as its conclusion this verse.

In fact, Roman Catholic doctrine teaches a union between church and state with the church as the ruling entity. A highly regarded nineteenth century Catholic journalist wrote,

No civil government, be it a monarchy, an aristocracy, a democracy... can be a wise, just, efficient, or durable government, governing for the good of the community, without the Catholic Church; and without the papacy there is and can be no Catholic Church (quoted by Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p. 54).

Revelation 17:3 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.

John is taken on a retreat. Only it isn't to a swanky conference center with chef-prepared meals. And no one else is attending. It's just him, an angel, and these visions.

I'm all for retreats and events. But you can get alone with God a lot easier. If you get alone you won't need to get away!

"Blasphemy" is not using foul language. It involves many things - among them would be adding to or taking away from the Word of God, such as by suggesting that salvation is by faith *plus* something else.

Again I remind you of the Reformation. At a very basic level, Roman Catholic doctrine does not teach salvation by grace through faith. Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers did not discover the biblical Gospel from their many years within Roman Catholicism. In fact, they proclaimed that Rome did not teach this. When they appealed for Rome to do so the answer was - and remains - "No."

You'll see what the "seven heads and ten horns" represent in verses nine through twelve.

Revelation 17:4 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.

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Worldly wealth and political power are not to be desired by God's people. History proves that it is terrifying when the state is dominated by religion.

Revelation 17:5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem.

- Babylon is the city where mankind first began to worship in organized rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel.
- Babylon was the capital of the first world ruler, Nimrod.
- Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in 585BC.

Babylon was also used to describe a spiritual condition. Peter referred to Rome as Babylon in his epistles. "In John's day Rome epitomized all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith" (Mounce) In some ways, the city of Rome was the clearest fulfillment of the "Babylon" attitude.

We're saying that "MYSTERY, BABYLON" is a religious system. There will also be a rebuilding of the city of Babylon on its ancient site. It will be the antichrist's capital.

The scholars at Dallas Theological Seminary have this to say about the the mother of harlots:

Nimrod, who founded Babylon (Genesis 10:8-12), had a wife known as Semiramis who founded the secret religious rites of the Babylonian mysteries, according to accounts outside the Bible. Semiramis had a son with an alleged miraculous conception who was given the name Tammuz and in effect was a false fulfillment of the promise of the seed of the woman given to Eve (Genesis 3:15).

Various religious practices were observed in connection with this false Babylonian religion, including recognition of the mother and child as God and of creating an order of virgins who became religious prostitutes. Tammuz, according to the tradition, was killed by a wild animal and then restored to life, a satanic anticipation and counterfeit of Christ's resurrection. Scripture condemns this false religion repeatedly (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19; 44:25; Ezekiel 8:14). The worship of Baal is related to the worship of Tammuz.

After the Persians took over Babylon in 539BC, they discouraged the continuation of the mystery religions of Babylon. Subsequently the Babylonian cultists moved to Pergamum (or Pergamos) where one of the seven churches of Asia Minor was located. Crowns in the shape of a fish head were worn by the chief priests of the Babylonian cult to honor the fish god. The crowns bore the words "Keeper of the Bridge," symbolic of the "bridge" between man and Satan. This handle was adopted by the Roman emperors, who used the Latin title Pontifex Maximus, which means "Major Keeper of the Bridge." And the same title was later used by the bishop of Rome. The pope today is often called the pontiff, which comes from pontifex.

When the teachers of the Babylonian mystery religions later moved from Pergamum to Rome, they were influential in paganizing Christianity and were the source of many so-called religious rites which have crept into ritualistic churches.

Time Magazine wrote that "according to modern Popes" Mary is "the Queen of the Universe, the Queen of Heaven... (December 30, 1991).

There is a famous book, *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop. In it he describes the connection between ancient Babel, Babylon, and Rome. Some of his research has been discredited so we don't really recommend it anymore.

You don't really need a book other than the Bible, do you, to understand that Heaven has no queen?

The apostle John is telling you there is a connection to Babel and Babylon in every false religious system.



To be accurate, the religion of the antichrist described here will include apostate Protestantism. It will unite all the religions of the world during the Great Tribulation with the state run by the antichrist.

(If you want to get deeper into these things, into their history, I'd recommend Dave Hunt and his book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*).

I want to end with a list I ran across in my studies. I really like Mark Hitchcock as a guy who writes clearly about Bible prophecy. In his, *The Complete Book of Bible Prophecy*, he lists six key things Bible prophecy can do for you:

1. Bible prophecy has a converting influence on seeking hearts.
2. Bible prophecy has a caring influence on soul-winning hearts.
3. Bible prophecy has a cleansing influence on sinning hearts.
4. Bible prophecy has a calming influence on stirring hearts.
5. Bible prophecy has a comforting influence on sorrowing hearts.
6. Bible prophecy has a controlling influence on serving hearts.

Wherever your heart is at, the Lord is coming!