

INTRODUCTION:

1. We now stand ready to begin our study of Revelation chapters 17 and 18, which deal with the religious, commercial, and political aspects of that entity, which is referred to as Babylon in the Bible. Before beginning chapter 17, let me give you some background information that will help you to understand MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, which is spoken of by John in Revelation 17.5: “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”
2. “Revelation 17 is a parenthetical passage that contrasts Mystery Babylon, the religious system, and the literal city of Babylon, which is fully discussed in Revelation 18. The time frame for Revelation 17 is the first half of the Tribulation, culminating with the destruction of the Mother of Harlots at mid-Tribulation.”<sup>1</sup>
3. In Genesis, we read of only four men surviving the great Flood with their wives. They were Noah and his sons Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Of the three, we know from the Biblical record that Ham was the most wicked, having so little respect or regard for his father, Noah that he greatly shamed his father by looking at his nakedness while he lay in a drunken sleep and then telling his brothers what he saw. We find that account in Genesis 9.19-24:
  - <sup>19</sup> These *are* the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.
  - <sup>20</sup> And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:
  - <sup>21</sup> And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.
  - <sup>22</sup> And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.
  - <sup>23</sup> And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness.
  - <sup>24</sup> And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.
4. Genesis 10.6-10 records that this wicked son Ham had a son named Cush, who also had a son named Nimrod. Ham’s grandson was Nimrod, who, in defiance of God’s command to go forth and replenish the earth, chose instead to gather a following around himself and build what became known as the Babylonian Empire.<sup>2</sup>
5. Through both Biblical and archaeological sources, we can piece together enough to know that Nimrod saw religion as a significant force among all men, even those who did not know God and refused to bow down to the authentic and living God. So Nimrod established a false system of religious idolatry, the first of its kind ever to exist, which focused on two things:

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Kollin, *Revelation Unlocked*, (Springfield, Missouri: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Press, 2003), page 165

<sup>2</sup> Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 24<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1965), page 82.

- a) First, the famous tower of Babel was the rallying point for the religion of those who opposed God.<sup>3</sup>
  - b) The second focal point of Nimrod's false religion was his wife Semiramis, or Astarte, or Ishtar, as she later became known.<sup>4</sup>
6. Remember that it was from this religious system that God called Abram, and from which he fled in response to God. That should leave no doubt that worship of the true and the living God and allegiance to this false religion are opposed.
7. Allow me to share with you some of the outstanding characteristics of Babylonian idolatry archaeologists have pieced together:
- a) Babylonian idolatry featured a caste of priests to whom confessions were made and indulgences and absolutions from sins were purchased or sought by other means.
  - b) Nimrod's religion also had an order of religious virgins who were temple prostitutes. As time went on, this false system even developed a kind of temple prostitution requiring every woman to function as a prostitute for at least a portion of her lifetime in service to the false religion.
  - c) After Nimrod's death, Semiramis, the widow of Nimrod, claimed that the son she gave birth to was a savior-son, conceived without a human father, making him the son of God. Thus, her glory in the religion Nimrod had established came from her "glorious son."
  - d) Her son, Tammuz by name, was killed. However, he was miraculously brought back to life after being mourned for with fasting and prayers for 40 days. When he was "resurrected" from the dead, their false religion incorporated the egg into that system as a symbol of that great miracle of raising Tammuz from the dead. That is how the Easter egg, correctly pronounced "Astarte egg" and named after his mother, came into existence. That is also where Lent came from. In Ezekiel 8.14, we see Jewish women weeping for Tammuz during this 40-day period leading up to the celebration of his resurrection: "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Of course, Ezekiel condemned this idolatry.<sup>5</sup>
  - e) Additionally, these idolaters used a small cake or wafer in their worship, Jeremiah 7.18: "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger." They also burned incense to Semiramis, who they claimed was the queen of heaven, since she had given birth to the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pages 83-84.

<sup>4</sup> Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. Van der Horst, editors, *Dictionary Of Deities And Demons In The Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Second Extensively Revised Edition, 1999), pages 109-114, 452-456 and Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons Or The Papal Worship Proved To Be The Worship Of Nimrod And His Wife*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Second American Edition 1959), pages 21-40, 307-310.

<sup>5</sup> Toorn., pages 828-834.

supposed son of God, Jeremiah 44.17, 25: “<sup>17</sup>But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. . . <sup>25</sup>Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.” By the way, the only queen of heaven in Scripture is Nimrod’s wife, the most prominent personality in Babylonian idolatry.<sup>6</sup>

- f) Finally, and this is most important to remember, this false religion was merely a tool and is merely a tool that was used by the ungodly to usurp the place of the true God in the lives of men. This was done to strengthen the Babylonian Empire.
8. Years later, when the Persians invaded Babylon, the high priests of this false religion fled to Asia Minor and settled in Pergamum, but not before Babylon had succeeded in spreading various versions of their faith throughout the world, usually featuring the mother-son cult.
- a) In Egypt, the mother and son cult was worshipped under Isis and Osiris.<sup>7</sup>
  - b) In India, they are still worshipped under the names of Isi and Iswara, her son.
  - c) In Rome, it was Fortuna and her son Jupiter.<sup>8</sup>
  - d) In Greece, the Great Mother was Ceres, with the babe at her breast.<sup>9</sup>
  - e) Even in China, newly arriving Jesuit missionaries were astonished to find the Madonna and child already being worshipped, and pictures of the Madonna had glory over her head, just as a Roman Catholic painter would have done it.<sup>10</sup>

Babylon succeeded in spreading her heresy the world over. And she did it long before Rome existed as a city or was recognizable as a religious system.

9. Two sources inform us of the escape of Babylonian priests to Pergamum: There is archaeology, the findings of digs of ruins of ancient civilizations, and clues that are uncovered. There is also the Bible. Read Revelation 2.13: “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan’s seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where

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<sup>6</sup> Hislop, page 74ff.

<sup>7</sup> Toorn, pages 456-458.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pages 336-337.

<sup>9</sup> Hislop, page 20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pages 20-21.

Satan dwelleth.” Since the word “seat” is the Greek word for throne, *θρόνος*, we can be quite sure that Satan’s seat, or throne, arrived in Pergamum from Babylon.

10. From Pergamum, the Babylonian religion with its Madonna cult spread into Italy when Pergamum became an official Roman city. By the time of the Lord’s earthly ministry, the Caesars had already begun to use the false religion, with its Madonna cult, to enhance their power over the people they ruled. Julius Caesar first took upon himself the dual role of political leader and religious leader of Rome when, as emperor, he had himself elected sacred high priest and was conferred with the title of Pontifus Maximus.
11. Even before the Lord Jesus Christ established His Church, the Pontifus Maximus existed. Though he was not at that time called the Pope, as he is today, he was the recognized leader and high priest of the Babylonian-originated religion and its Madonna cult.
12. When the Gospel was advanced through the ministries of poor and persecuted Churches, significant inroads were made against this false religious system wherever it was encountered and however it was labeled in its specific location. As time went on and the fires of evangelism began to cool, vigilance was relaxed, and unbelievers began to infiltrate the Churches, especially when Constantine declared the Roman Empire a “Christian” empire, and it became politically advantageous to be a “Christian.”
13. Being the emperor of Rome and now professing to be a Christian, Constantine’s reign introduced what some have labeled Constantism, the end of the separation of church and state, and merged churches into official state religions. Of course, there have always been a remnant of believers in Christ and congregations holding out for the faith. But persecution was both severe and effective for centuries.
14. For about 300 years, it reached the point where many Churches had more unsaved people as members than saved people, and the cooled-off Christians allowed the lost crowd to bring the thoughts and ideas of the Babylonian religion and the Madonna cult into the Churches without rebuking them. That is what brought about, especially with the so-called “conversion” of Emperor Constantine, the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as we see it today.
15. In summary, Catholicism is not the offspring of Babylonian idolatry. The Roman Church *is* the mother of idolatry transplanted from Babylon to the Italian peninsula. Just look at her.
  - a) Nimrod’s priests are Rome’s priests and fathers.
  - b) Ishtar’s religious virgins are Rome’s nuns.
  - c) The 40 days of weeping for Tammuz have become Lent.
  - d) The Babylonian feast of Tammuz’ resurrection has become Rome’s Easter, which liberal Protestantism also observes.
  - e) Ishtar and Tammuz have become what Rome means when they refer to Mary and Jesus.

- f) The little cakes referred to in Jeremiah are now the host of the Catholic mass.<sup>11</sup>
  - g) The incense offered to the queen of heaven has its counterpart with Rome, too.
  - h) Babylon's ceremonial sprinkling for remission of sins matches Rome's baptism by sprinkling for removal of original sin.
  - i) And worst of all is that Babylon offered salvation by works apart from the bloody sacrifice demanded by God, while Rome provides what she calls the unbloody sacrifice of the mass.
16. As we begin our study of Revelation chapter 17, remember that the exterior of Babylon may have changed. However, she is still the rebellious religion started by Nimrod, the hunter of men's souls, and rebel against God. Can the child of God have any part of that? No!

(17.1) And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

1. Here begins an interruption in the flow of events of John's narrative, an interlude, if you will. But John uses a very important interlude to explain some of the things not yet mentioned in Revelation.
2. Who is this great whore which sitteth upon many waters? It seems ridiculous to think of a description of a literal whore sitting upon "many waters." Thus, the "many waters" is likely a symbolic reference to the great mass of Gentile humanity. If that be true, the whore here describes some great system. Verses 15 and 16 will confirm this.
3. Let me read from *The New American Bible*, a Catholic edition. Note the authority behind this edition.

a. First, the title page:

**THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE**

**Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources by members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, SPONSORED THE BISHOP'S COMMITTEE OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE<sup>12</sup>**

b. On the next page are a series of "nihil obstat" for the text, for the Bible text, for the Dictionary and Appendices, and for the "Catholic Commentary on Holy

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<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah 7.18; 44.19

<sup>12</sup> *The New American Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971), title page.

## Revelation Chapter 17

Scripture (Bible Facts). These “nihil obstats” signify that there is nothing objectionable to the Roman Catholic theologians attesting.

- c. On the same page are “imprimatur” which signify the authority for publishing this Bible in its finished form. The “imprimatur” are from the Archbishop of Washington, the Administrator, the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the Archbishop of Westminster.
- d. This is not a pamphlet produced by some renegade priest who is at odds with the Roman Catholic hierarchy. This version of the Bible is fully backed by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, including a statement signed by the pope at the time of publication, Paul VI:

For the faithful in all English-speaking countries the publication of *The New American Bible* represents a notable achievement. Its pages contain a new Catholic version of the Bible in English, along with illustrations and explanations that facilitate the understanding of the text.

For more than a ¼ of a century, members of the Catholic Bible Association of America, sponsored by the Bishops Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, have labored to create this new translation of the Scriptures from the original languages or from the oldest extant form in which the texts exist.

In so doing, the translators have carried out the directive of our predecessor, Pius XII in his famous encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, and the decree of the Second Vatican Council (*Dei Verbum*), which prescribed that “up-to-date and appropriate translations be made in the various languages, by preference from the original texts of the sacred books”, and that “with the approval of Church authority, these translations may be produced in cooperation with our separated brethren” so that “all Christians may be able to use them”.

The holy task of spreading God’s Word to the widest possible readership has a special urgency today. Despite all his material achievements, man still struggles with the age-old problems of how to order his life for the glory of God, for the welfare of his fellows and the salvation of his soul. Therefore we are gratified to find in this new translation of the Scriptures a new opportunity for men to give themselves to frequent reading of, and meditation on, the living Word of God. In its pages we recognize His voice, we hear a message of deep significance for every one of us. Through the spiritual dynamism and prophetic force of the Bible, the Holy Spirit spreads his light and his warmth over all men, in whatever historical or sociological situation they find themselves.

On all who have contributed to this translation, and all who seek in its pages the sacred teaching and the promise of salvation of Jesus Christ our Lord, we gladly bestow our paternal Apostolic Blessing

From the Vatican, September 18, 1970

Paulus P. P. VI

4. Now the marginal notes for Revelation 17.1-6: “Babylon, a *symbolic name* (v. 5) of Rome, is graphically described as the great harlot.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See footnote for Revelation 17.1-6 from *The New American Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971), page 1393.

5. Is it not interesting that the Roman Catholic position is that this whore is Rome? The Roman Catholic Church maintains that the whore is the pagan religion of Rome before Catholicism emerges as the dominant force in religion.
6. I agree with all that, except for one thing Rome fails to mention: Catholicism is the same paganism that existed under Rome's emperors, except for a few outward cosmetic changes and a change in the organization's name.
7. What John refers to here is Roman Catholicism! Subsequent verses will support this contention.

(17.2) With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

1. It should be mentioned, at this point, that the false religion seeking to supplant the worship of the one true and living God is characterized as feminine. I have a long-held conviction of the tendency of Western Christendom toward effeminacy, and that trend reaches its climax in the completely feminine nature of the false religion.<sup>14</sup>
2. True religion is masculine. The proper worship of God is led by men and not by women, and by masculine men and not like the effeminate men who pastor so many churches and who cater to so many of the women who fund parachurch ministries. Why else would the Apostle Paul encourage the Corinthian congregation, and by extension all Christians, women included with men, to “quit you like men” in First Corinthians 16.13. This is also why those called to pastoral leadership must be men, according to First Timothy 3.1-5:
  - <sup>1</sup> This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.
  - <sup>2</sup> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;
  - <sup>3</sup> Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;
  - <sup>4</sup> One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
  - <sup>5</sup> (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)
3. When a Church loses its distinctive masculinity and becomes effeminate or tolerates the pretense of promiscuity by the men in the Church tending to look like and behave like the promiscuous men in the dominant culture who do not know what godly manliness is, then that Church is moving in the direction of this end-time

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<sup>14</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2005), Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization Of Christianity*, (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), John W. Robbins, *The Church Effeminate & Other Essays*, (The Trinity Foundation, 2001).

false religious system. Rome is already there. Evangelical Protestant Christianity and the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement are rapidly moving in that direction with their offend no one brand of soft leadership. Sadly, fundamentalism, with so many Churches having women worship leaders, having so many women teaching young men and even men, and with all of the lightning and thunder gone from the pulpits across America, is not all that far behind.

4. Again, there is a reason why this false religion is characterized as feminine. You want your women to be feminine. Make no mistake about that. For example, The longer the hair is on a woman, the more feminine it makes her look, something the Apostle Paul addressed to the Corinthians. But religion should not be feminine. And spiritual leaders should not be either women or effeminate men.
  5. This whore is guilty of spiritual prostitution with the kings of the earth. Any historian would agree that this description parallels Rome's tendency to bend the truth for political expediency and profit.
  6. And the part about being "drunk with the wine of her fornication"? The power, prestige, and enlarged egos built up intoxicate those who participate in this spiritually illicit game.
- (17.3) So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
1. Notice that verses 1 and 2 are John's record of the words spoken to him by one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials, describing to John what he will show him. To show John the scene, the angel must take him to a wilderness, a spiritual wilderness. Nothing but moral barrenness surrounds this political-religious system we will learn of.
  2. The woman in the scene sits on a scarlet-colored beast. We are looking at something which will take place in the future. This suggests that during the Tribulation period, the great whore church will ride upon the fortunes of the great political machine of the antichrist, who is here described as the beast.
  3. That this beast is political Rome she rides upon, or the revived Roman Empire, is suggested by the fact that the beast is scarlet colored. Not only is scarlet significant as the Biblical color of sin, Isaiah 1.18, but scarlet is also the color of Imperial Rome.
  4. That the beast represents the antichrist and his political machine is also shown by "names of blasphemy" and the "seven heads and ten horns," which are already known to be related to the antichrist, Revelation 13.1.

- (17.4) And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:



*Revelation Chapter 17*

1. That the woman is arrayed in purple and scarlet is significant since those are colors frequently and generally used by the Roman Church. The bishops and cardinals of Rome primarily use these colors.
2. Decked with valuable ornaments refers to this symbolic woman being gilded. Your Bible's marginal reference may use the word gilded. When something is gilded, it is pretty different on the outside than on the inside. Beauty and wealth are to be seen on the outside of the Roman Church, but what about the heart of this idolatrous system that perverts the Gospel of Jesus Christ into a works righteousness scheme? That is another story.
3. Notice also that she has a golden cup in her hand. Which one of all the world religions does the golden cup or the golden chalice personify? Rome! In addition, that precious and beautiful cup full of what? Abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. John writes about spiritual adultery here.
4. How can a child of God remain in a religious system with such a stench in the nostrils of a righteous and holy God like ours? I do not know.

(17.5) And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

1. What we learn in this verse is my, my, my, my. On her forehead is her name. By the way, in ancient Rome, prostitutes oftentimes wore headbands with their names written on them so those who committed fornication with them would know their names.<sup>15</sup> And from her name, we shall learn her identity.
2. "Mystery Babylon the Great." This means that Roman Catholicism is Babylonian religion. "Mother of harlots" identifies this religious system as the fountainhead, the source of spiritual harlotry. Again, this must mean Babylon, the starting place of idolatry.
3. "Abominations of the earth." This suggests that at least the majority of the abominations of the earth are tied to this religious system. And if you will remember from my introduction to this chapter, I stated that every idolatrous religion in the world could be traced to Babylon as its source and origin.

(17.6) And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

1. This woman, this religious system, is drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus and the saints of God. Are you aware of the conservative estimates of Church

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<sup>15</sup> See footnote for Revelation 17.5 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2016.

historians who place the number of people slain by the Roman Catholic Church in the last 1600 years in the multiplied millions?

2. These are numbers arrived at by historians who investigated the destruction of villages, cities, regions, sects, movements, etc., to remove Rome's opponents.
  3. Foxe's *Book Of Martyrs* tells of Rome surrounding the French city of Lyon and murdering every inhabitant so she could be sure to stamp out the growing Christian movement in the city. How did Rome accomplish that feat? Remember, at that time, the Pope had the largest standing army in the world. Something to keep in mind the next time you read John 18.36, where the Lord Jesus said to Pilate, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
  4. When John saw, he wondered with great admiration. He was thunderstruck. He was stunned that such a perversion of Biblical Christianity could have occurred. How cleverly the enemies of Christ have taken the name of Christ so that they might oppose the cause of Christ and slay the servants of Christ.
- (17.7) And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.
1. "The angel, perceiving that John wonders at what he sees, states that he will declare the mystery of the woman and of the beast. He does so, however, by describing the beast first in detail, then the woman and subsequent action relating to her. Few passages in Revelation have been the subject of more dispute among scholars who have attempted to interpret them than this explanation of the angel. Great care, therefore, must be exercised in determining precisely the component parts of the divine revelation herein given."<sup>16</sup>
  2. "And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?" The angel, questioning why John marveled as he did, asks, "Why don't you understand? Here, let me explain things so you will understand." This is not a rebuke on the part of the angel, just an expression of astonishment.
  3. The angel then says, "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns." I read from commentator Bob Kollin's remarks on this subject:

This seven headed, ten horned beast stands for the amalgamation of all pagan religions that have existed through the ages and that will dominate the ten kings during the first half of the Tribulation. Neither the heads nor horns are crowned, indicating that this religious system has no direct authority over any of the world empires or kings of the seventh empire. A false satanically inspired religious system has influenced and dominated the first six empires and will strongly influence and dominate the seventh empire during the first half

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<sup>16</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), page 249.

of the Tribulation. This religious system is hated by the ten kings and will be destroyed by them. The kings give their power to the Antichrist who is called the “Beast” and his Beast kingdom will be the eighth and last Gentile kingdom to persecute Israel.

**Seven Heads or Kingdoms / Empires**

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medo-Persia
5. Greece
6. Rome
7. Reconstituted Rome (ten horns)-this kingdom occupies the territories of the old Roman Empire but is considered reconstituted, because there will be ten kings instead of one ruler or Caesar.

**Eighth Empire**

This empire will be ruled by the Antichrist, and according to the Book of Daniel, will actually be a revival of the Old Grecian Empire within the Reconstituted Roman Empire. The satanic prince that empowered and controlled Alexander the Great is considered by many expositors to be the beast out of the abyss of Revelation 11:7 that will control, empower, and possess, or oppress the Antichrist. Other possible identities for this satanic prince are the Prince of Babylon or Prince of Assyria, for the Antichrist will have a connection to all three prior kingdoms.<sup>17</sup>

(17.8) The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

1. There is honest disagreement among Bible teachers as to the identity of this beast. Some people believe that this beast is the Roman Empire, which was, and then which ceased to exist, and which will be revived again someday and be the power base of the antichrist, who is the person referred to as the beast.
2. Still, other Bible teachers take a more literal view and hold that this verse speaks about the antichrist and tells us much about his identity. Notice some things:
  - a. He was alive, then he wasn't, and he will live again someday. This seems to hint that the beast is some resurrected person who was dead when John wrote his Revelation, but who was alive previously.
  - b. The beast shall ascend from the bottomless pit or the great abyss. If the beast is some resurrected person of great wickedness, the possibility of this new lease on life might stem from the fact that he was and then was not. In other words, he didn't die normally and his soul would have gone to Hell. In this case, his soul might have gone to the great abyss instead if those two places were not one and the same.

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<sup>17</sup> Kollin, pages 309-310.

- c. Some think the beast referred to here, that the antichrist, is Judas Iscariot come back to life. Why? Judas was “the son of perdition.” Judas went to “his own place,” which might not have been Hell but could have been the bottomless pit. Moreover, Judas had been alive but was dead when John penned his Revelation.
3. “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.”
    - a. I think the beast mentioned here is not Judas Iscariot reincarnated or somehow resurrected. Why so? First, he is here called a beast. If he is Judas Iscariot, why not name him? The reason he is not named, in my opinion, is that this is not Judas Iscariot. I am also not inclined to think the “bottomless pit” is the same thing as Hell. Judas Iscariot went to Hell when he died, but this beast comes from someplace else, the place I think God imprisoned fallen angels, and at this time, he will be released from his imprisonment to wreak havoc on earth.
    - b. What is meant by the phrase “was, and is not” as it applies to this beast? I am inclined to think that this beast, some powerful lieutenant of Satan now able to serve him once again after thousands of years of imprisonment, was active on Earth at some time in the past but was not active on Earth during the time of the Roman Empire, during the Apostle John’s span of life.
    - c. One possibility is that this beast is one of the creatures alluded to in Genesis 6.2, who was isolated from the human race from the time of the Flood until this future time when his release will coincide with the outpouring of God’s wrath on the earth.
    - d. Kollin puts forth a second possibility:

The beast that was, is not, and yet is, who ascends out of the bottomless pit is not a person, because people are not in the abyss. The beast is a satanic prince (fallen angel) who is allowed to vacate the abyss at this time in history. The beast that “is not” means he is not associated with the Roman Empire of John’s day but existed or was on the scene of history prior to Rome. The beast “that was’ (sic) connects him to one or more of the five world empires before Rome: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, or Greece. Because the Antichrist will arise from the territory of the Old Grecian Empire, one explanation for the beast from the abyss is that he is the Satanic Prince of Greece who controlled and dominated Alexander the Great as he conquered the known world of that time. The Prince of Greece would then have been bound in the bottomless pit since the fall of ancient Greece. However, it is noted that the satanic prince could be either the Prince of Babylon or the Prince of Assyria, as the Antichrist is referred to by both titles, King of Babylon and the Assyrian, and territory from both former Empires, Babylon and Assyria, fell within the boundary of the Old Grecian Empire. The phrase “yet is” means that the Beast will reappear on the scene of history to empower and control the Antichrist as he leads the eighth

empire toward world domination. As has been stated previously, reference to the Beast is not only to a satanic prince, but also to the Antichrist, and the eighth kingdom ruled by the Antichrist.<sup>18</sup>

- e. But have no fear that this beast will succeed where before God caused his efforts to fail. He will ravage the Earth and torment the unsaved alive at that time. However, this same beast from “the bottomless pit” will eventually go “into perdition.” Therefore, he will go from the frying pan into the fire, from thousands of years of imprisonment to an eternity in the lake of fire.
4. “and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”
    - a. Who will wonder when they see this beast? Right. Those that dwell on the earth. We already know that this often-used phrase of John’s refers to those who are permanent residents of Earth, those who are lost. How do we know? We know because Christians are not permanent residents of this old world, according to First Peter 2.11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”
    - b. But what phrase in this verse indeed confirms that those who dwell on the Earth are not saved? Right. “whose names were not found written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.”
- (17.9) And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.
1. It seems that John has now given us a key to the woman’s identity. Verse 3 helps us to understand which woman we are talking about: “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”
  2. Is John revealing the woman’s identity by giving us her geographical location? Does she sit on seven mountains? You do know which city of this world is the city of the seven hills or the seven mountains, do you not? In my Roman Catholic Bible, the commentary on verse 9 says, “*Seven hills*: of Rome.”<sup>19</sup>
  3. Rome admits that the location is Rome because this location seems to be undeniable. The Roman Catholic Church is very pleased that most of her adherents do not read the Bible, or verses like this would put her out of business. People would conclude that this woman John shows as a spiritual harlot is actually that one world church that Rome is presently trying to build.

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<sup>18</sup> Kollin, page 168.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote for Revelation 17.9 from *The New American Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971), page 1393.

4. Is Rome succeeding? You had better believe it. Protestantism is running back to Rome, with such notable Christian writers as Geisler and J. I. Packer, such well-known personalities as the late Pat Robertson, the late Charles Colson, Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, and such movements as Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement leading the way.
  5. Verse 9 begins with these words: “And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom.” This phrase indicates that what we are about to read will be most challenging, requiring wisdom to get our arms around.
  6. “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.”
    - a. Here is the great difficulty that must be addressed when seeking the correct understanding of this and the following verses; the statement I have just read very obviously employs symbolism. No one suggests that the woman riding the beast is not a symbolic representation of something.
    - b. The problem that is created by recognizing this has to do with the “seven heads” and the “seven mountains.” If the symbolic woman is sitting on the seven heads, which are seven mountains, how can the heads and the mountains be literal? A symbolic figure cannot sit upon a literal one. Either they are all literal, the heads, the mountains, and the woman, or they are all symbolic.
- (17.10) And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.
1. Again, there is much disagreement about the proper interpretation of this verse.
  2. The Geneva Bible notes indicate that Roman emperors are referred to here.
  3. Spurgeon thought this might refer to “the kingdoms which arose at the breaking up of the old Roman empire, and all became vassals of the Papal power.”<sup>20</sup>
  4. Sale-Harrison was convinced that this refers to the different forms of the Roman government. He writes, “The ‘seven Kings’ refer to the seven distinct forms of government which characterised the Roman Empire from 32 B. C. to 476 A. D., namely, Kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvirs, Military Tribunes, and Imperial.”<sup>21</sup>
  5. Most dispensationalists think that John means world empires here, beginning with the Egyptian and ending with the antichrist’s world empire in the second half of the Great Tribulation.

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<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Devotional Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

<sup>21</sup> L. Sale-Harrison, *The Remarkable Revelation*, (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1930), page 172.

(17.11) And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

1. This verse, too, is interpreted according to how verse 10 is understood.
2. Notice that we find the word “perdition” again, ἀπόλεια. This word comes from the same root word as “Apollyon” and refers to destruction.
3. Revelation 17.9-11 is admittedly challenging to decipher, but two commentators have spent a large part of their lives studying this book of the Bible, Bob Kollin and John Walvoord. Following are Kollin’s summary of Revelation 17.9-11 and then a paragraph from Walvoord’s book:

The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. From this passage, many commentators believe Rome to be the seat of the Antichrist, rather than Babylon or Jerusalem. Rome is identified because it sits on seven hills. However, the context of these verses is kings and kingdoms. Also, other scriptures refer to mountains as kingdoms. Five kingdoms and their corresponding kings have fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The ruling government of John’s day was Rome and is the kingdom that “is.” The kingdom that “is to come” will be the seventh kingdom or the Reconstituted Roman Empire. When the Antichrist appears, he will be on the scene for a short time, which is 3 1/2 years or the last half of the Tribulation Period. The beast kingdom that “was” stands for one of the five fallen kingdoms identified above. The kingdom that “is not” clarifies that it is not Rome, the kingdom in John’s time, but is an eighth empire. This means that ten kings rule the seventh empire independently for the first half of the seven-year Tribulation. Then the Antichrist conquers three of these ten kings (kingdoms), with the other seven giving him their power and authority, and he alone rules this new eighth empire, which is a product of the seven prior kingdoms represented by the seven heads.<sup>22</sup>

The final form of world government, symbolized by the eighth beast itself, is the world empire of the great tribulation time. The revived Roman Empire which will be in sway immediately after the rapture of the church is apparently indicated by the seventh head, while the beast, described in verse 11 as the eighth, is the world empire, which is destroyed by Jesus Christ at His second coming. In summation, what is described in verses 8 through 11 is the final form of Gentile world power in alliance with apostate religion symbolized by the harlot.<sup>23</sup>

4. Needless to say, “we see through a glass, darkly.” There will come a day when passages such as this will be much easier to understand, as the Spirit of God provides greater illumination and these prophecies unfold.

(17.12) And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

1. Daniel refers to ten horns in Daniel chapters 7 and 8. This verse and those two chapters likely refer to the same kings, but who is referred to? Most Bible commentators used to think that the European Common Market countries would fulfill this verse or that they would comprise the ten nations, which makes fulfillment possible.

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<sup>22</sup> Kollin, page 169.

<sup>23</sup> Walvoord, page 254.

2. John's statement suggests that the beast's ten horns represent ten kings. However, again, who are these ten kings? They were unknown to John, having "received no kingdom as yet." They will rule at sometime in the future, presumably during the Tribulation period John's Revelation is now opening before us, but only for a short time. I refer to "one hour" as symbolism for a short period. Could it be that they exercise authority during the first half of the seven years of Tribulation, but throw in with the anti-Christ and submit to him during the last 3½ years?
  3. The late Dr. Kenneth Connolly made a good point when he suggested that since Daniel's prophesy features a figure with two legs and feet of iron mingled with clay, representing the end-time empire, it might be wise to consider that the anti-christ's political regime would be comprised of an eastern and a western region. The student of God's Word should keep an eye open for this.
  4. Is it any surprise in light of the great schism of 1054 A. D. that divided the Roman Catholic Church in the West from the Eastern Orthodox Church that the early Reformers connected this prophecy about the ten kings and the antichrist to the Pope and the Church of Rome? I think the early Reformers were wrong in their understanding of prophetic things, but I certainly see why they made the popes or the Catholic Church the antichrist.
- (17.13) These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.
1. Unity among political kingpins? Strange, is it not? But then, enemies often do unite in their opposition to God.
  2. It is amazing how frequently this cycle is repeated. Herod and Pontius Pilate were enemies. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians were enemies. However, all of these united to crucify the Son of God.
  3. It ought to warm the heart of every Christian worker or pastor to see folks who do not like each other and who are never united in anything except in their opposition to the one who seeks to do God's will, no matter who that one might be.
  4. People who do not see such alliances develop are spiritually naive. Folks who see such alliances and actively support them, or support them by not condemning them, are showing their true colors ... are they not?
  5. As Jesus once said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."<sup>24</sup> There is no neutral ground in Christianity. The strong and bright light of Biblical truth makes all things either black or white.
- (17.14) These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 12.30



1. What insanity is it to think of the antichrist and his allies making war against the Lamb of God? They cannot possibly win this war. The Lamb shall overcome them because He can't suffer defeat!
2. It is impossible for the Lord of lords to be defeated and have Satan reign as lord over Him. Moreover, the King of kings can't have another rule over Him as king. It simply is not possible!
3. It is interesting to note that the Son of God is referred to as the Lamb in this verse, which foretells the victory of Christ over the beast. It is ironic to think of "the Lamb" winning this battle against the dragon. It is ironic until you realize that the basis for Christ's victory was His death on the cross. And on the cross, He was the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
4. In His victory, He will be accompanied by His faithful followers, those who are described as the called, chosen, and faithful. Who are those who are called, chosen, and faithful? Learn some things about them, from Romans 8.28-30:
  - <sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.
  - <sup>29</sup> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
  - <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
5. Romans 8.28-30 connects eternity past to eternity future by referring to a particular category of individuals, believers, who are the objects of God's five actions: foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying, and glorifying. Briefly consider them:
  - a. Foreknowledge – Notice that verse 28 refers to those who love God and who are, verse 29, foreknown by God. In First John 4.19, this same John writes, "We love him, because he first loved us." To be sure, John 3:16 reveals that God loves the world. But this is a particular love that produces the response of love. To know the essence of God's foreknowledge, you must see the love of God's foreknowledge because foreknowledge does not simply mean to know something ahead of time. We do not see here that God knows ahead of time things about Christians, but that He knows Christians ahead of time. Thus, Paul is pointing out by using this word that God, outside the boundaries of time, brought into existence a prior love for some of those not yet created that is different from His love for others not yet created. Is this ahead-of-time love the result of what God knew certain people would do how they would respond to the Gospel? No, for that would make God the one responding to the actions or decisions of a sinner rather than God as the Grand Initiator of all that is right

and good. As James wrote, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” James 1.17. Thus, foreknowledge speaks of a knowledge that is bound up in love. It is a knowledge that came into existence before time and creation.

- b. Predestination – Some people are horrified by this word, but Paul put it to good use in Ephesians 1.4-6, where the word reveals God’s decision concerning the destinies of those He has foreknown:

- <sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
  - <sup>5</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
  - <sup>6</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

What has God determined the destiny of those He has foreknown to be? He has determined that the destiny of those He has foreknown will conform to His Son’s image. The word “predestinated” is never used in connection with those who suffer eternal punishment, so God cannot be accused by the stupid of predestining anyone to perdition. Neither should we sit still when anyone stupidly accuses us of believing God would predestine anyone to perdition.

It is good to point out that foreknowledge and predestination are two things God does before time, in eternity past.

- c. Calling – Two kinds of calling are found in the Bible, termed by theologians a general and effectual call. When the Lord Jesus said, “For many are called, but few *are* chosen,” He referred to a general call to salvation issued to every sinner.<sup>25</sup> What Paul is referring to here in Romans 8.30 is what is called an effectual call. That is, everyone who is called utilizing an effectual calling responds. Thus, every person foreknown in eternity past and predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ in eternity past will receive the general call to the Gospel that everyone receives. But additionally, and what is mentioned here in Romans 8.30, that person will receive an effectual call. Why the necessity of an effectual call? Because Jesus said, in John 6.44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” No sinner would ever come to Christ but for the effectual call to salvation.
- d. Justification – Justification refers to that moment when the sinner is actually reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, Whose propitiating sacrifice on Calvary’s cross completely satisfied God’s righteous demands that sins and offenses against Him be punished. With justification, the justified one benefits from Christ’s work of suffering the righteous punishment for his sins. As First

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew 22.14

Peter 3.18 declares, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Everyone who is foreknown is predestinated. Everyone who is predestined is called. Everyone who is called is justified.

- e. Glorification – This is the end of the golden chain that connects eternity past to eternity future. As foreknowledge and predestination take place in eternity past, with calling and justification occurring during the time of the elect’s life here on Earth, glorification fulfills God’s glorious plan and design for us by completing the entire process of salvation. Glorification includes a glorified body suited for timeless eternity, standing in the presence of the Savior whose sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension to the Father’s right hand made our salvation possible, and ruling and reigning with Him.
  - f. One final comment concerning these five words. “The aor. speaks of God who sees the end from the beginning and in whose decree and purpose all fut. events are comprehended and fixed (Hodge).”<sup>26</sup>
6. In addition to being “called,” they are “chosen.” What does “chosen” mean? Does not this word mean “picked,” “selected”? I am reminded of our Lord’s words to His disciples in John 15.16: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you ....”
  7. Is it any wonder that those who have been foreknown, who have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, who have been effectually called, who have been chosen, will be faithful? The Lord Jesus Christ cannot lose! In addition, those who are with Him, which probably refers to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, cannot lose either.
  8. Look ahead with me.
    - a. Jude 14 and 15:
      - <sup>14</sup> And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,
      - <sup>15</sup> To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.
    - b. Now Revelation 19.11-16:

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<sup>26</sup> See comment on Romans 8.30 in Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 367.

- 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
- 12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
- 13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
- 14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
- 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
- 16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

9. You see? Jump ahead to the final chapters, and you see the Lord cannot lose. Neither can we lose because He has already won. It has been ordained. This is why John wrote, “the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.” And “they that are with him.” Are you “with him”?
- (17.15-16) <sup>15</sup> And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
- <sup>16</sup> And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.
1. Now the angel interprets some things for John and us again. Just like we supposed in Revelation 17.1, the waters that the whore will sit upon are not literal waters but symbolize the vast Gentile hordes. Our understanding of verse 1 seems to be confirmed.
  2. Verse 16 points out that the allies of the antichrist shall destroy the whore, that one world church which they used to advance their interests. Why would they do such a thing? They probably have concluded that they do not need her anymore. Their control over humanity is so complete that religion, false religion, is no longer a necessary tool for managing the world population.
  3. I suspect Satan is working both ends against the middle. On the one hand, he is empowering the false prophet to consolidate his power and to strengthen the great whore so her influence over the people and her opposition to the 144,000 whose religion is genuine can be enhanced. On the other hand, the political influence of the antichrist will be strengthening as the ten rulers consolidate their power.
  4. At the midpoint of the Tribulation, when the antichrist’s political power is supreme, and he no longer needs the false religious organization symbolized by the great whore, his underlings will utterly destroy her, symbolized here by the words “these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.”

5. When this is accomplished, the false prophet will control all worship, and all worship will be directed to the beast, the antichrist.
- (17.17) For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
1. Notice who is sovereign over all. Even the wicked actions of the Christ-haters will be turned about by God to fulfill His will and bring Him honor and glory.
  2. When will humanity realize that you cannot defeat God? Such insight escapes the unaided mind of every person. Sin so distorts the perceptions of people that we never really see how immense God is and how very puny we are in comparison.
  3. Why can we not see the futility of opposing God, the senselessness of being estranged from God, or the recklessness of being opposed to God? Why will these individuals not comprehend that even in their rebellion, they will not thwart God's grand plan and purpose?
  4. Part of the answer is found in First Corinthians 2.14-16:
    - <sup>14</sup> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.
    - <sup>15</sup> But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.
    - <sup>16</sup> For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.
  5. Another part of the answer is found in Job 9.10, where Job comments about what he has learned about the doings of God: "Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number."
  6. Then there is Paul again, in Romans 11.33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
  7. From these verses, we see that there are three reasons why the wicked people spoken of in Revelation 17.17 end up accomplishing His will after all:
    - a. First, according to Revelation 17.17, God "put in their hearts to fulfil his will." If this is not evidence of God's sovereignty, then I do not know what is.
    - b. Next, we saw in First Corinthians 2.14-16 that natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things. Therefore, these wicked, lost people cannot recognize spiritual reality because they are blind and deaf to spiritual truth. Thus, no unsaved person can comprehend God's doings.

- c. But the final reason these men did not see where their actions were leading is that God is so magnificent, profound, and utterly beyond His creation (including us, of course) that none of us can genuinely grasp His doings. Even when the Spirit of God illuminates us to understand some things, we will still be in the dark about so much more than we can ever comprehend.
8. God's will triumphs over all completely, utterly, absolutely, and finally. It is folly to oppose Him.
- (17.18) And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.
1. "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city"
    - a. The woman is the great whore, the tribulation time false religion who is the culmination and climax of all that is religious harlotry and spiritual adultery. In embryonic form in this age in which we now live, the great whore is embodied by the Roman Catholic Church, whose spiritual ancestry can be traced back to Nimrod's Babylon, the fountainhead of idolatry worldwide.
    - b. But is the city mentioned here specifically the modern-day city of Rome? Probably not. After all, Revelation 17.5 does identify her as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Has the mystery been fully revealed to us at this time? No. So, we cannot say with certainty that we are dealing with a literal city rather than a symbolic one.
  2. "which reigneth over the kings of the earth."
    - a. Critical to our understanding of this phrase is the time frame that is referred to. The time frame of this phrase is our future, during the seven years of Tribulation that comes after the Rapture. So, this is not a reference to the religious system that *reigned* over the kings of the Earth, which would undoubtedly identify the great whore as the Roman Catholic Church. No other religious system has accomplished the feat of ruling over kings as has the Roman Catholic Church.
    - b. The great whore is not the Roman Catholic Church but what the Roman Catholic Church will come to be since this statement refers to a religious system that "*reigneth*." That is, during the last half of the Tribulation, the context in which this verse is set, the great whore will be reigning. She does not yet reign.