

A Harlot Named “Babylon” Rides a Beast

(Revelation 17)

Introduction

The Old and New Testaments have many different symbols for the antichrist. They include: (1) little horn, (2) vile person, (3) king of the north, (4) sea beast, (5) man of sin and (6) a harlot.

- Today, we are going to focus on that harlot.
- There’s lots of drama – she rides a beast, sits on water and sits on he heads of the beast!

Orientation – General Overview

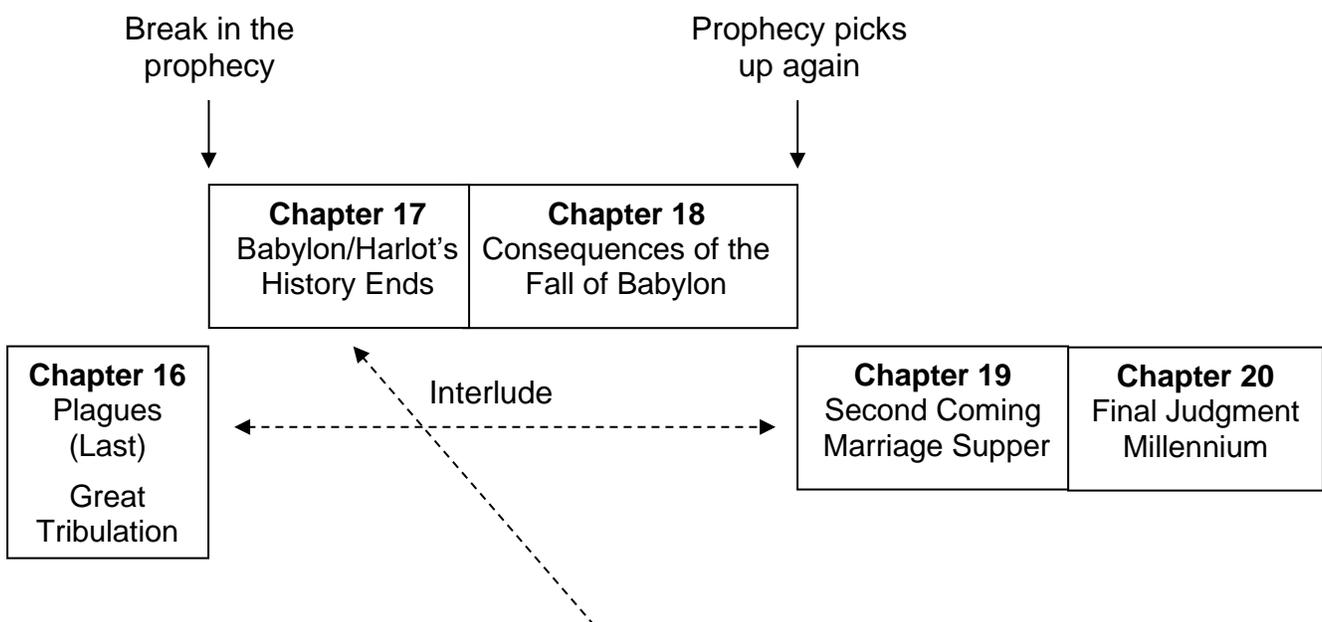
Revelation’s end-time prophecies fit perfectly together to form a beautiful picture.

Chapter 13: Presents **Satan’s** end-time workers and their mission

Chapter 14: Presents **God’s** end-time workers and their mission

Chapters 15–16: Reveal God’s final mission of wrath just before he comes

Chapters 17–18: **Interludes** – a review of how Satan’s workers come to their end



Our focus is going to be on chapter 17.

Key Symbols Emphasized in this Chapter Help to Understand

- **Woman** – means a church or a group of believers (II Corinthians 11:2, Hosea 2:19, SS 6:10)
- **Harlot** – that’s a “bad woman” an “unfaithful woman” – thus it would be an “unfaithful church,” called at times an “apostate church.” The Bible also uses other words for this: *whore* and *prostitute*.
- **Beast** – is a nation, country or, as often used in the Bible, a “kingdom” (Daniel 7:17)
- **Heads** – on a beast are its leaders (Revelation 17:9-10)
- **Horns** – kings or leaders of nations that help, support or defend the beast (Revelation 17:12)
- **Wilderness** – a place to hide (deceive) (Isaiah 3:16-18, 13:21)
- **Water(s)** – peoples, languages, races of the world (Revelation 17:15)
- **Sits/sitting on** – ruling over or judging

There are other symbols we will study, but this will help us get started.

Our story is about a harlot riding a beast. But first, let’s look at what led up to this prophecy.

God’s Wrath – Right at the End

Revelation 15 and 16 bring many world events to an end. Just three texts to show this will serve to move us forward to our Revelation 17 study:

1. *“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up **the wrath of God**”* (Revelation 15:1).
2. *“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, **It is done**”* (Revelation 16:17).
3. *“And the **great city** was divided into three parts, and **the cities of the nations fell**: and **great Babylon** came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath”* (Revelation 16:19).

What is that “great city”?

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18). (She becomes the supreme ruler of the world.)

Woman:

- Harlot – apostate church
- A great city – civil power

World ruler (called “*queen*” in next chapter) – literally over all:

- Its name is Babylon.
- A woman/church named “Babylon” comes to its end (16:19).
- This church/city, church/state, rules the world when it comes to that end (17:18)!

Who is that “*woman*”? That is detailed further in chapter 17. We know she is a church, a “great city, she is named Babylon and she rules the world.

Moving into Chapter 17

We are about to be told who she is and how she came to her end (judgment) (16:19). It is at the time of the end, by that terminal judgment occurring, when heaven cries, “*It is done*” (Revelation 16:17).

Why the name “Babylon”? Coming from the ancient Akkadian word *babilani*, which meant, “*the gate of God(s).*” But – beginning with Genesis 11:9, it came to represent confusion.

- Originally, she was an ***apostate city*** under Nimrod when its tower of Babel was built.
- In Daniel’s day it was a major world power. The Babylonian kingdom ended with the death of King Belshazzar because of his ***defiance of God*** (Daniel 5:25-28).

Both stories help us in this end-time prophecy. This “Christian church” apostatizes and becomes the antichrist!

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (Revelation 17:1).

We have just been given two amazing bits of end-time information.

1. This is the era when the harlot sits on waters. Symbols:
 - a. “*Water*” (peoples of the world – Revelation 17:15)
 - b. “*Sitting*” – ruling over
2. Our storyline will include **when** this antichrist woman rules.

The evil of this harlot now starts to be described in the next verse:

“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” (Revelation 17:2).

- Spiritual fornication means dealing in falsehoods.
- The world imbibes or “drinks in” the doctrines of error. They become part of those drinking her wine.

“So he [that angel] carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness [John now has a vision]: and I saw a woman [church] sit upon a scarlet coloured beast [nation], full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3).

- This is John’s first time seeing the harlot.
- She’s on a seven-headed (leaders) beast (nation).
- Sitting means she is ruling over – has power over this nation.
- This is the same apostate church that has power over the people of the world (vs 1) by the waters she sits on.



Remember: This relates to the end of time and how Babylon comes to an end!

Question: What church rules over or has charge of a nation (i.e., woman sitting on a beast)?

1. There is only one church/nation that could match this prophecy.

2. It began as a church and state in 1929.
3. The “scarlet color” of the beast suggests that it is sinful (Isaiah 1:15, 18).
4. The “blasphemy” means that she is defying God.

The Harlot and the Beast

We must now show you proof.

Let’s first look at some history to give us an important background.

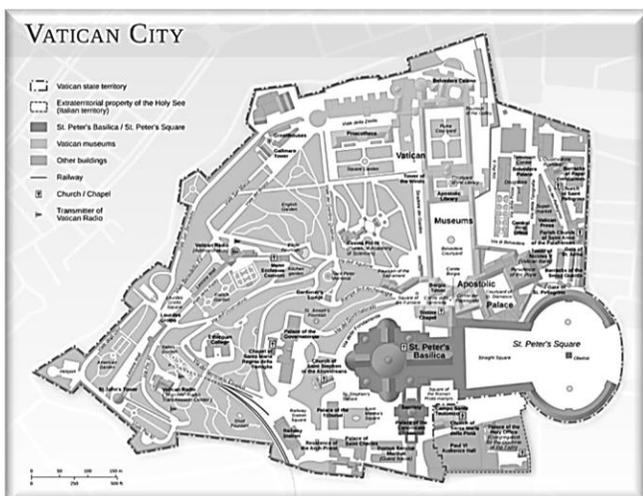
- The Roman Catholic Church used to own a large segment of land called “The Papal States” (756–1870).
- Then Italy became a nation in 1861. By 1870 Italy had confiscated all those lands and the city of Rome from the Roman Catholic Church.
- The papacy was suddenly isolated to a few buildings. It had no nation – no kingdom – no state.



<http://www.reformation.org/papal-states1.jpg>

Prophecy must be fulfilled! If this is the papacy, it **must once again** have a **nation** just before the end – i.e., the woman (church) and the beast (nation). The woman (harlot)/church must rule a beast/nation.

1. That **did happen** – on February 11, 1929!
2. The country of Italy, under Mussolini, gave the Catholic Church 108.6 acres of land that became a **nation** called Vatican City State under the Lateran Accords.



Cardinal Gasparri, representing Pope Pius XI, has just signed the Lateran Concordat and now Mussolini, prime minister of Italy, signs the document for King Victor Emmanuel III.

This new combination of **a church and a state** was then called the **Holy See**.

1. The harlot **with** the beast **is**
2. The Holy See.

The Holy See became a special Permanent Observer State of the United Nations and now has 183 ambassadors just like any other nation.

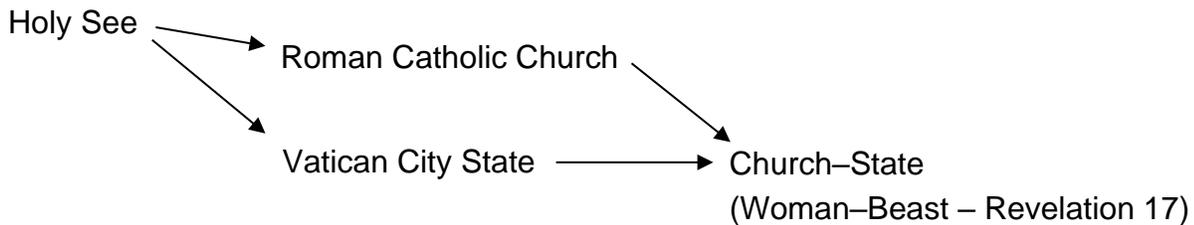
1929 is **when** this prophecy **began to be fulfilled**, when the woman (church) rides the beast (nation) once again. The rest of the chapter will relate to that **starting date!**

That is an *end-time date* to remember – you will later see why.



Ambassadors meeting with the pope
<http://www.zimbio.com/pictures/DufWZmT2UXt/Pope+Receives+Ambassadors+Accredited+Vatican/1FE9DAXKFCp/Benedict+XVI>

These ambassadors and the association with the United Nations (which began in 1957) are all related to this Holy See (a simplified graph).



The beast (noted first in verse 3):

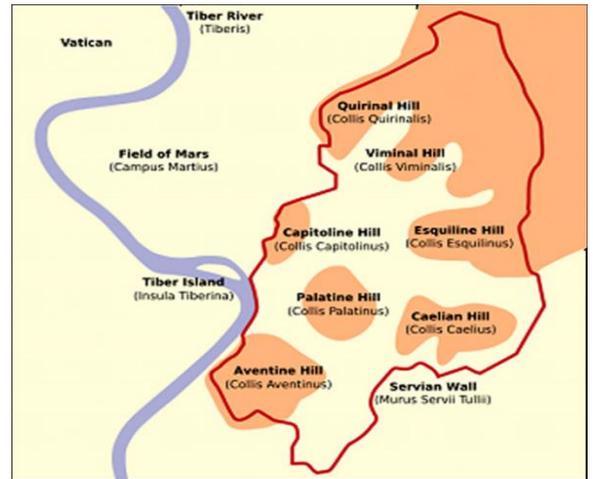
1. Is **“filled”** with names of **“blasphemy.”** **That is a characteristic of the antichrist.**
2. Has seven heads – **seven of its leaders or popes** are significant to this end-time prophecy – which began in 1929.
3. Has ten horns – there are ten **“powers”** that give strength to the Vatican State, which the harlot is **“sitting on”** or ruling over – the New World Order.

Then the angel gives John irrefutable evidence what the harlot and the beast are.

“And here is the mind which has wisdom [this means that God is giving us a clue that we can figure out with His blessing]. *The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth*” (Revelation 17:9).

The **harlot** in Revelation 17 **sat** or **sits on** (rules over) three things:

1. Waters – representing all the people and nations of the world (world power – vs 1, 15) (She will be a ruling world power right at the end.)
2. Beast – rules over a state or nation (the Vatican City State – vs 3)
3. She is now on seven mountains or hills (*oros*) (vs 9) to help us know **where** she rules.



Rome – City of Seven Hills

Rome was known in the ancient world as the **“city of seven hills”** at the time John wrote this prophecy.



In 71 A.D., Emperor Vespasian minted a coin with his picture on one side and the goddess of Rome, *Dea Roma*, on the other. She was sitting on seven hills.



The Seven Hills

The Roman Catholic Church is the powerful prophetic church–state. The Bible represents her as a harlot – an unfaithful church. These hills were celebrated by annual festivals called the Septimontium at the time of John.

Roma was a prostitute. She symbolized the moral standard of Rome and all who associated with her.

The Prostitute Tries to Allure

Remember the *reason* the “wrath angel” from Revelation 16 gave this prophecy: **to show what led up to her destruction** (Revelation 17:1). Now we learn more about this “harlot”/church.

“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 17:4).

Purple and scarlet are colors of:

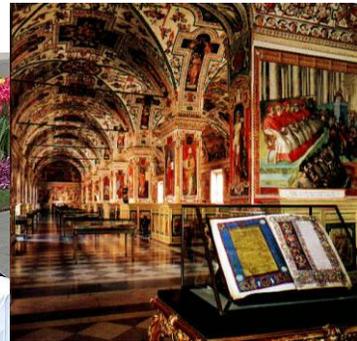
1. Royalty in the Bible
2. Cardinals and archbishops are dressed in scarlet and purple, respectively. (leaders of the Roman Catholic Church)



Cardinal Scarlet



Archbishop Purple



Gold

“decked with gold and precious stones and pearls,” (vs 4)

- “decked” means that she is **excessively** dressed to **allure**.
- With her “gold,” rare “stones” and “pearls” means she is flaunting her **wealth**.

“having a golden cup in her hand” (vs 4)

- The cup is what she shares her fornications or false doctrines from. It is “*full of abominations and filthiness*” (vs 4) (God’s emotional words).
- The “gold” cup makes the world think that what is in it is a wonderful “drink.”
- Here is the 1963 Vatican coin – celebrating Pope Paul VI:
 - Notice the cup is in the right hand (greatest importance).
 - The Cross is in left hand (least important).

Vatican Coin



Just like in Bible prophecy

Is the Cross really of secondary importance to the papacy?

Though the upside-down cross here is supposed to symbolize the crucifixion of Peter:

- That mocks what Christianity stands for – Jesus and Him crucified.
- *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and **him crucified**”* (I Corinthians 2:2).



Looking Closer at What God Named the Harlot

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 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. 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” (Revelation 17:5-7).

- She is “mother” to other Babylon-like churches.
- God’s description of a harlot means that she is a rebel.
- God now promises that if we think and pray, we will understand.

Has the Roman Catholic Church been responsible for the spilled blood of God’s people?

Millions were tortured and murdered for Jesus Christ during the two Inquisitions. A website¹ documents much of those atrocities:

“That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history.”²

¹ <http://www.mtc.org/inquis.html>

² Lecky, William Edward Hartpole; *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, vol.2 (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1904) p. 32.

An excellent, though lengthy, article describing in detail the **right** (!!!) of the Roman Catholic Church to take the life of “heretics” is found in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 266!

“Experience teaches that there is no other remedy for the evil, but to put heretics [Protestants] to death; for the [Catholic] church proceeded gradually and tried every remedy: at first she merely excommunicated them; afterwards she added a fine; then she banished them; and finally she was constrained to put them to death.”³

Referring to those Seven Heads – an important verse!

“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”
(Revelation 17:10).

When did the church and state become reunited?

- 1929 – with the Lateran Treaty.
- Pope Pius XI was in power then.

“Five are fallen,” (vs 10)

The word “fallen” (*epesan*) is a euphemism (figure of speech that softens a thought) for death.⁴

These are the five popes **from 1929 on** (when the church/state – woman/beast started):

Pope Pius XI – Number One:⁵

He presided over the Lateran Treaty in 1929. He reigned as Pope from February 6, 1922, and as **sovereign of Vatican City** from 1929 until his death on **February 10, 1939**.



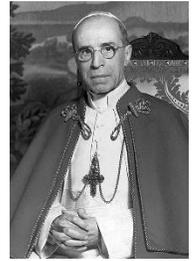
³ Cardinal Bellarmine, famous champion of Romanism, cited by Schumucker, p. 76.

⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 617.

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Ratti1922.jpg>

Pope Pius XII – Number Two:⁶

He reigned from March 2, 1939, to October 9, 1958. He invoked ***ex cathedra papal infallibility*** on November 1, 1950, when he defined the dogma of the assumption of Mary:



“By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the ***Immaculate Mother of God***, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

This reveals one of the blasphemous issues that the beast/woman is identified with.

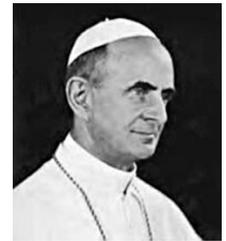
Pope John XXIII – Number Three:⁷

He reigned from October 28, 1958, to June 3, 1963. He called the ***Second Vatican Council*** (1962–1965) – but did not live to see it to completion because of his untimely death.



Pope Paul VI – Number Four:⁸

He reigned from June 20, 1963, to August 6, 1978. He completed the Second Vatican Council work and fostered improved ecumenical relations with Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants, which resulted in a number of historic meetings and agreements. He met many U.S. presidents and was in power when the first and only Catholic President, John F. Kennedy, was elected. He was intensely interested in the world being socialistic.



Pope John Paul I – Number Five:⁹

He reigned from August 26, 1978, to September 28, 1978 (33 days). Much controversy surrounds his death. He was known as the “smiling pope,” and many world leaders were comfortable talking with him. He was a scholar/theologian and grasped issues quickly.



These five popes died. By the prophecy, they would fulfill “***five have fallen.***” Our challenge comes with the next phrase:

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Pacelli12.jpg>

⁷ <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0261.htm>

⁸ <http://www.omsoul.com/catalog/pope-paul-vi-m081.html>

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Paul_I

“and one is,” (vs 10)

The next pope was Pope John Paul II. **Three popes** were in power during the year of 1978.

Pope John Paul II – Number Six: ¹⁰

He reigned from October 1978 to April 2, 2005. Though he has passed away, issues most important occurred during his reign to validate this prophecy. He was a unique person, and his reign was the second longest in papal history. He traveled more than any other pontiff – and was seen in person by more than any other human being! Heads of state visited him virtually every week during his tenure. This is when the world began to wonder after the beast (papacy – 13:3).



Revelation 13 refers to one of the heads.

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Revelation 13:3).

May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot three times by a Turkish assailant. He had complications – but he recovered. The deadly wound was healed!



Pope John Paul II –
shot May 13, 1981

This *begins* to fulfill the prophecy of Revelation 13:3 – *“and all the world wondered after the beast,”* which has a very end-time application.¹¹

His funeral was the single largest gathering of heads of state in history.

Four **kings**, five **queens**, at least 70 **presidents** and **prime ministers**, and more than 14 leaders of other religions attended alongside the Catholic faithful. It is also likely to have been the largest single gathering of Christianity in history, with numbers estimated in excess of four million mourners gathering in Rome.



Funeral of Pope John Paul II

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Paul_II

¹¹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 282.

Millions around the world watched the funeral.”¹²

How do we know about the “one that is?”

That begins a very important point in end-time prophecy:

1. Pope John Paul II came to power in 1978.
2. The world wondered after him (vs 3).
3. He had a deadly wound that was healed (one head of the beast) (1981).
4. He began the bond of Revelation 13 [beast (Holy See) and false prophet (United States)], which began in 1984 with President Reagan.
5. No person has been seen by more people than Pope John Paul II.
6. The Islamic revolution in Iran was in 1978 – beginning issues in Daniel 11:40-45 – competition between Islam and Christianity.



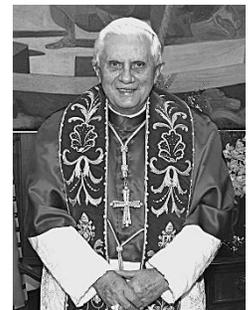
Pope John Paul II

This man was the sixth head!

“and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.” (vs 10)

Pope Benedict XVI – Number Seven:¹³

When the “one is” is seen and applied, the next pope or papal head “is not yet come.” On April 2, 2005, Pope John Paul II died. On April 19, 2005, Joseph A. Ratzinger became the seventh head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI.



Benedict XVI

The Bible says that he will reign only a “short space.” This is from the Greek word *oligos*, which means, here, a small period of time. This is a relative word, and it suggests that he will not reign near as long as his predecessor but considerably shorter.

- He resigned in February of 2013.
- That means the first part of this prophecy has ended – that of the seven heads!

¹² CNN.com. Retrieved on 2008-10-19.

¹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BentoXVI-30-10052007.jpg>

- We will move into Phase Two and Three of Revelation's beast prophecies in our next study.

There are seven heads. Seven – the Bible's "perfect number." A prophetic eighth will follow.

Conclusion:

Are we at the end of time? Who is the antichrist? This study should help clarify that.

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thessalonians 2:3-4 – NET).

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