

Chapter 17

Verse 3- *And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.*

a woman sitting on a scarlet beast- We will see soon that the beast no longer needs the prostitute after his false resurrection. He is empowered by Satan until the point of his “resurrection” and his indwelt by him afterward. In Revelation 11:7:

*When they (the Two Witnesses) have finished their testimony, **the beast that comes up out of the abyss** will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.*

“The devil always throws away his tools.” Howard Bickers

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Verse 4- *The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls, holding in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her sexual immorality,*

Purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones, pearls- Then, as now, prostitutes needed to identify themselves for business. Culturally, prostitutes wore colors every day people could not afford (dye was expensive!) Later, we see gold, precious stones, pearls as part of the heavenly city (21:18-21). This could be a mockery of the bride who was dressed beautifully for her husband described later in 21:2.

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gold cup full of abominations- The outside of the cup will be beautiful, and the inside will be filthy. The flesh of those who drink from the cup will be satisfied, but it will come at a price- eternal damnation (separation from God).

The expression cup of gold is an allusion to Jeremiah 51:7-
"Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand; she made the whole earth drunk."

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Verse 5- *and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery: "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*

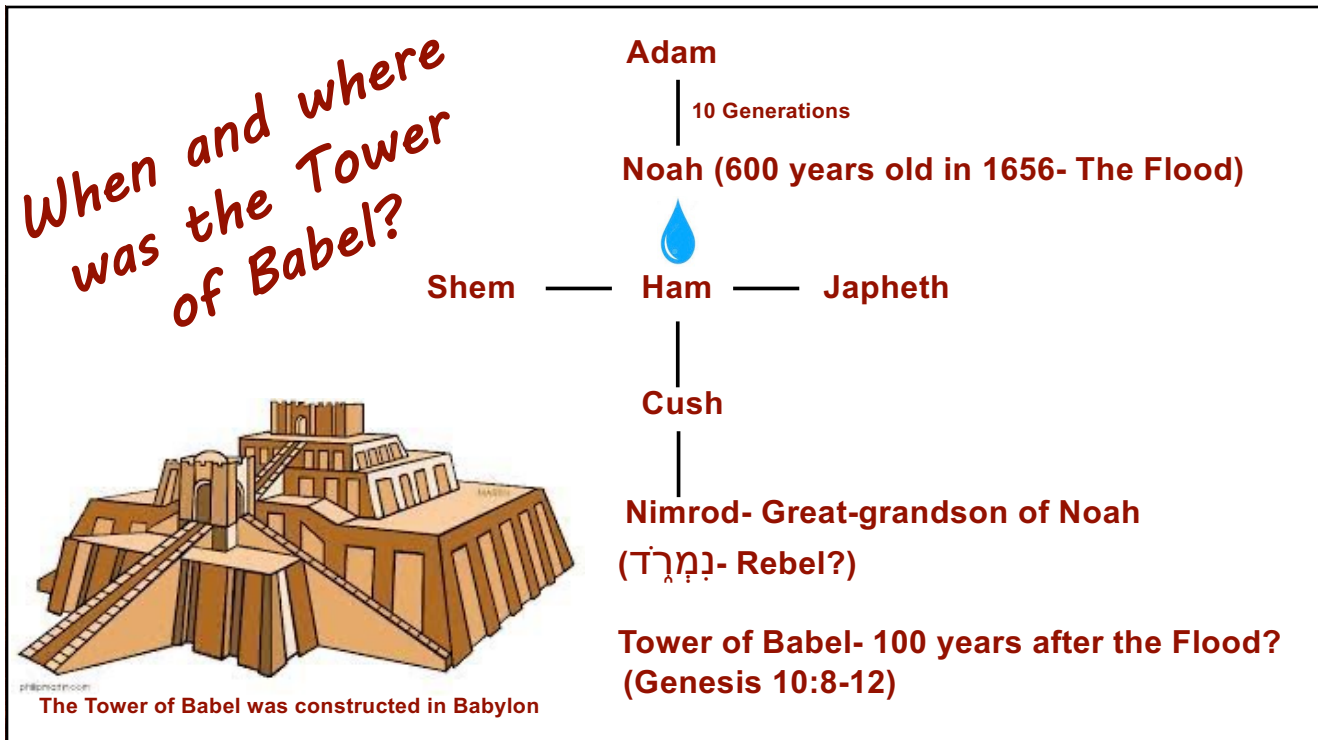
forehead a name was written- Prostitutes would identify themselves by wearing their names or the name of their owner on a headband. It is an imitation or maybe a mockery of the name of God on the saints. It also reminds us of the mark of the beast on the forehead or hand.

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a mystery- Something that is hidden, but it will soon be revealed. Also, it can refer to the ancient mystery religion of Babylon that God thwarted at the Tower of Babel.

By contrast, Christ the rider on the white horse wears a name on his thigh, "King of kings, Lord of lords" (19:16).



Ziggurat: A pyramidal stepped temple tower



Ziggurat of Ur, Iraq



Maya Pyramid,
Guatemala



Koh Ker Temple,
Cambodia



Monks Mound,
Collinsville, Illinois



Ziggurat in Jilin, China



Pyramids of Meroe - Sudan



Borobudur temple
Java, Indonesia

Borsippa ("Tongue Tower") Ziggurat located in Babylon Province, Iraq



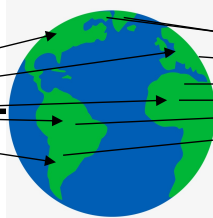
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MOTHER OF ALL PROSTITUTES- The first unified false religion of the Tower of Babel will once again return to Babylon under this **MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES** (*false religions*).



Babylon (Genesis 10)



False Religions/Cults Today



Babylon (Revelation 17)

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Verse 6- *And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.*

drunk with the blood of the saints- The prostitute is the global religious system, and the beast she rides is the global political/economic system. Followers of the Lamb do not have the mark of the beast (belong to him), so they cannot buy or sell, and their life is forfeit if caught by the world religious system.

saints...witnesses- The same people. Many Christians will die in the Great Tribulation.

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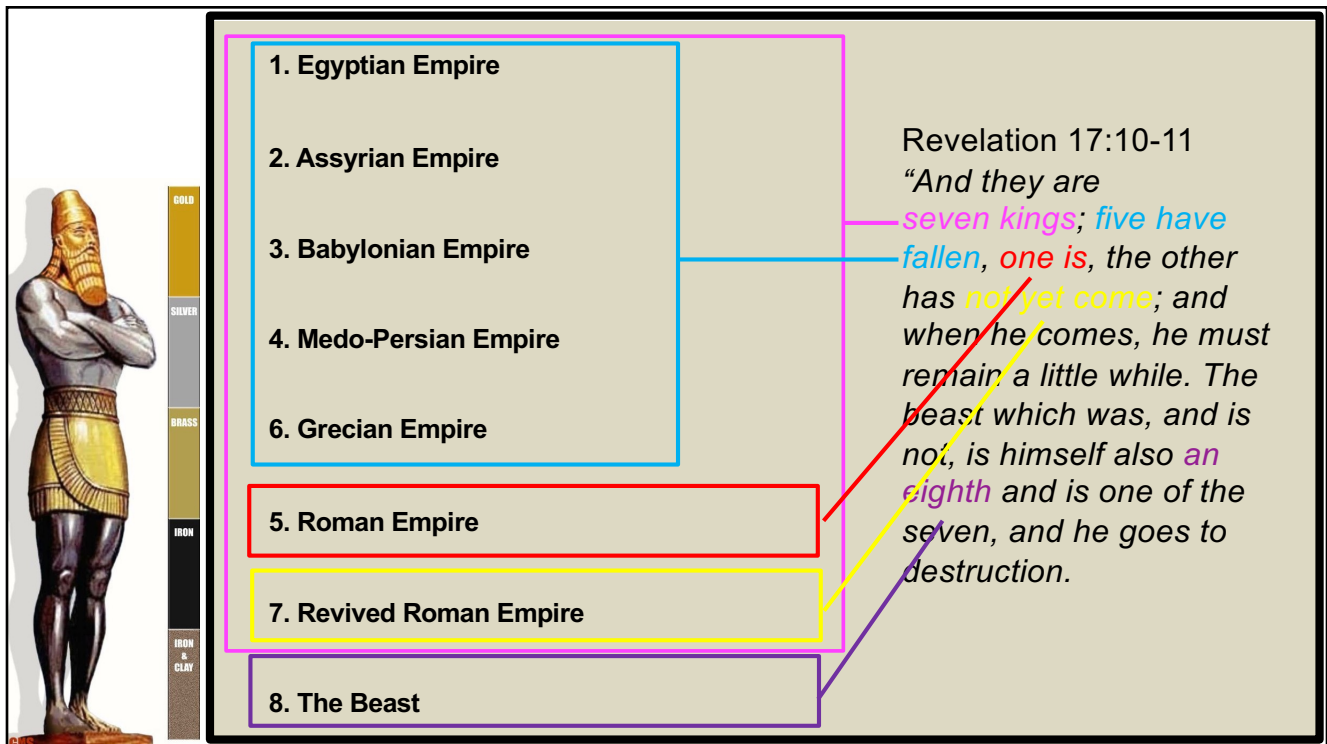
I wondered greatly- “*I marveled with great marvel.*” Thinking he would see the demise of Babylon, he saw the prostitute drunk with the blood of the saints (remember, we are back in the first part of the Tribulation). Instead of seeing their victory, he sees their death and martyrdom. In verse 7, the angel will explain the mystery of Babylon the Great.

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Verse 7- *And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.*

Why do you wonder?- John was shocked and fearful at the scene of the woman on the beast. He was surprised that the false religious system was successful, but the angel’s question supposes that John should have understood the vision.

seven heads and the ten horns- The culmination of seven previous world empires divided into ten global regions.



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Verse 8- *"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who live on the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was, and is not, and will come."*

was, and is not, and is about to come up- The beast mimics the nature of the Lamb.

Revelation 1:4- *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him **who is**, and **who was**, and **who is to come**, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne,*

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was, and is not, and is about to come up- This also speaks to the fatal head wound of the beast mentioned in 13:3. He was, he died, and then he was again.

come up out of the abyss- Up to this point the beast is influenced by the devil and now he is indwelt by him.

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names have not been written in the book of life- This reminds us of verse 3:5 and 3:8. God sovereignly knows who will come to faith since the creation of the world. Those whose names are not in the book belong to the beast.

he was, and is not, and will come- A repetition of the first part of the verse.

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Verse 9- *Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits,*

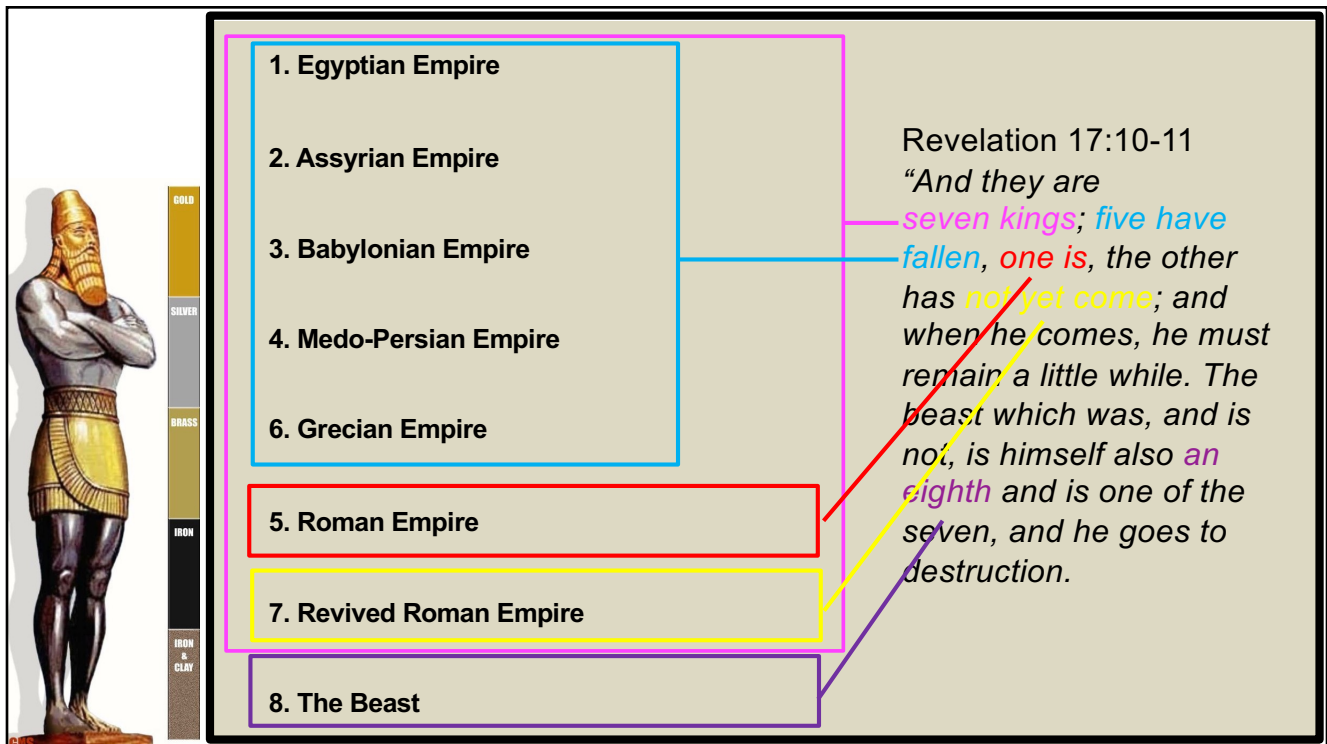
seven heads are seven mountains- The seven heads (nations) are also representative of seven mountains or hills (orē), which many believe characterize the city of Rome (Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Equiline, Viminal, Quirinal, and Capitoline). This global religion could incorporate the Roman Church and other world religions.

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Verse 10- *and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.*

they are seven kings- There are three primary interpretations:

- Seven Roman emperors (preterist view)- Julius Caesar, Augustus Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Nero revived (the beast)
- Seven hills of Rome- Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Equiline, Viminal, Quirinal, and Capitoline
- Seven world kingdoms- Egyptian, Assyrian Empire, Babylonian Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman, Revived Roman



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Verse 11- *The beast which was, and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.*

was, and is not, is himself also an eighth- The beast rises from the sea and lives (*was*), appears to die (13:3) (*and is not*) but is “resurrected” (13:3) (*and is*).

himself also an eighth- He transcends the revived Roman (world) empire and becomes a global religion and economy unto himself.

he goes to destruction – The beast will be cast into the lake of fire (20:10).

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Verse 12- *The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.*

ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom- This will be the earth divided into ten regions. Ten represents a “complete” representation of the earth as described in Daniel 2:41-44. These ten rulers will be given authority as the kings of the east.

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Daniel 2:41-43

*And in that you saw the feet and **toes**, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have within it some of the toughness of iron, since you saw the iron mixed with common clay. And just as the **toes** of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong, and part of it will be fragile. In that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in their descendants; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not combine with pottery.*

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Verse 12- *The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.*

one hour- A brief period of time. It is described as “one day” in 18:8.

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Verse 13- *They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.*

one purpose- The purpose of these regional rulers is the same as the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth. It is to destroy Christ and His followers, to destroy Israel, and to prevent the kingdom of God from beginning on earth.

