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Relevant Questions

1. What is your identification of the “great whore, the Mother of Harlots, that great city”?

All systems who claim to worship God, joined loosely in an umbrella system of religion, expanded and extended by the autocratic religious systems developed in medieval times.

2. What is your identification of the “scarlet colored beast”?

All systems who claim not to worship—call them secular, godless, atheistic, or satanic—joined by common goals or enforced worldwide goals, and enthusiastically worshiping Satan when he comes.

3. What is your identification of the “seven heads/mountains/kings”?

Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Dragon, Medieval autocratic religious systems (Roman Church), Enlightenment separation-of-powers systems (Protestantism and Atheism).

4. What is your identification of the “ten horns”?

Whatever powerful systems, subsumed in Satan’s system, are available and willing to unite to carry out Satan’s agenda of destroying the religious system.

5. What is the time-frame in prophetic history that this vision points to?

From ancient Babylon (or even from the outbreak of war in heaven) to the final battle between Satan and Jesus Christ.

6. Are you prepared to provide biblical proof for each of the above answers?

I intend to show in this paper, from the Bible, why I believe this way at this time, including the answers to the questions posed here. I hesitate to call what I do “proof” because we are dealing with things beyond human ken.

7. Are you prepared to reconcile all relevant statements in Sister White's writings to your answers above?

I think I include and reconcile all such statements in this paper, though I will welcome anyone’s presentation to me of something I may have overlooked.

Outline

List of Charts

Abstract

Introduction

Extremely Brief Literature Review

The Approach of this Proposal

Verb Tense as a Key Factor

Speech, Imagery, and Plot Analysis

The Story of Hearing Revelation 17

The Guide, Rev 17:1-3a

The Woman, Rev 17:3b-6

The Animal, Rev 17:7-8

Seven Heads, Mountains, Kings, Rev 17:9-11

Ten Kings, Rev 17:12-14

The Woman Again, Rev 17:15-18

Discussion Supporting This View

Animals and Empires

Listening from Within the Audience

Verb Tenses at Work

Systems

Sounds

Two Functions for Sound Repetitions

Allusions

Ellen White

The Story of Satan

Lessons for the Present

Further Discussion Exploring Other Views

Abbreviations and Review

Temporal Location of the “Is” and the “Is Not”: Three Options

Composition of the “Seven” and the “Eight”

Other Ways of Composing the “Seven” and the “Eight”: Two More Options

Composition of the “Five Fallen”: Four options

The Roman Church in Revelation 13 and 17

Summary of Further Discussion Exploring Other Views

Excursus: Comparing Revelation 17 with Daniel 11

Abbreviations and Distinctions

Egypt, Islam, and Atheism

Examining a Chart of Daniel 11 for Comparison with Revelation 17

The Penultimate Scene

Conclusions

Relation to Adventist “Pillars”

Further Study

The Final Story

Closing

Appendices

I: Revelation 17

II: Daniel 11

Bibliography

List of Charts

Revelation 17

Repetition of Sounds from All of Revelation in Revelation 17

Antecedents to, and Rivalries of, the Woman

Excerpt from Chart: Repetition of Sounds from All of Revelation in Revelation 17

Finding the Five Fallen

Distinguishing the King of the South (King South) from the Scarlet Animal

Progression of Religion: Egypt, Islam, Atheism, and Others

Three Scenes in the Last Row

Appendix I: Revelation 17

Appendix II. Daniel 11

Does She Kiss Him? Identifying the Woman and Her Beast in Revelation 17

Wilma Zalabak, D.Min.

Abstract

The identities of the woman and the beast in Revelation 17 attract attention from many, scholars and unschooled alike. Adventists involved in the conversation usually find the Roman Church in more than one of several possible positions in the chapter, carried over logically from previous chapters. Logical conundrums and visual puzzles abound, like Babylon and the Roman Church each sitting on its own head! Furthermore, one wonders where all the other religions are. It seems that a coherent, agreed-upon interpretation could unite Adventists, elevate the prophetic voice, and invigorate evangelism. I propose a user-friendly, intratextual solution that John’s hearers would have recognized and understood and that upholds Ellen White’s scenarios of the end. I will use the analyses of speech, imagery, and plot, perhaps my primary key being the analysis of the “is” and the “is not” as both in present tense and therefore concurrently operative. I will show that the beast is Satan’s super system, finally and finely developed and on track to fight the Lamb. I will show that the woman is all false worship systems, still not united, yet mixed in her super system for an uneasy truce with, and final destruction by, Satan’s super system.

Introduction

This is a proposal that I am honored and humbled to present regarding the identity of the woman and the beast in Revelation 17. Does the woman really kiss the beast, thereby changing the future and fortunes of both? Let us remind ourselves that, since the final fulfillment of these prophecies are understood to be yet future, their interpretations should be held loosely with open hand and heart.[[1]](#footnote-1)

After this Introduction, the logic will move through three sections, the first being the quickest view of this paper’s proposal: first, The Story of Hearing Revelation 17; second, Discussion Supporting This View; and third, Further Discussion Toward Other Views. At the end, I have included an Excursus Comparing Revelation 17 with Daniel 11. A short Conclusion follows and then the charts to which I will refer in the second, third, and fourth sections mentioned above.

Extremely Brief Literature Review

The questions of identities regarding the woman and the beast in Revelation 17 occupies much scholarly attention, authorship, and publishing. The mere tabulation and recognition of past and current works would require a much longer paper than this is meant to be. I will cite a few selected authors from each of the preterist, futurist, and historicist viewpoints as I understand them.[[2]](#footnote-2)

From the preterist viewpoint, David Aune lists Babylon as a name for Rome, and the beast as Rome, also.[[3]](#footnote-3) Eugene Boring gives Babylon as Rome, and the Beast also as Rome.[[4]](#footnote-4)

From the futurist viewpoint, G. K. Beale finds Babylon represents “worldly economic forces in collusion with the state in persecuting Christians.”[[5]](#footnote-5) He sees the beast as Satan[[6]](#footnote-6) while recognizing that in John’s day the beast would have been seen as Rome.[[7]](#footnote-7)

If Adventists could settle on and articulate a united view in the historicist trajectory, the reputation and efficacy of prophecy among us would be elevated and our evangelism might be invigorated. However, caution is in order lest, in settling too quickly, the accepted view should exclude important facets of some of the outliers.

Jacques Doukhan, in his book published in 2002, writes that the woman “represents the church who has flirted with and succumbed to worldly lovers.”[[8]](#footnote-8) “The beast regroups all three powers—all of God’s enemies—into a real coalition.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Doukhan does, earlier, for Revelation 16, identify these three powers: “The alliance between the three powers—the dragon (occult powers), the beast (official Christianity), and the false prophet (the United States)—now dissolves.”[[10]](#footnote-10) This then is why the beast of Revelation 17 must regroup all these powers within himself.

Jon Paulien, in his book published in 2007, gives his denotations in few words. “The woman represents a worldwide union of religion. The beast symbolizes worldwide political union.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Sigve Tonstad, in his book published in 2019, suggests the woman could be the “fleeing woman” of Revelation 12 fallen from her purity.[[12]](#footnote-12) This woman was seen earlier as a “composite figure, carrying within herself elements of Eve, the Community of faith, Israel, and even the Virgin Mary.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Tonstad states the beast is the dragon[[14]](#footnote-14) whom he earlier recognized as Satan.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Ranko Stefanovic, in perhaps the most recent large Adventist publication of such ideas, the Andrews Bible Commentary, published in 2022, identifies the woman as an “end-time religious confederacy” and the “end-time coalition of dragon, beast, and false prophet.” On the same pages, he identifies the beast as “political power” and the “resurrected sea beast.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Stefanovic equates the sea beast with the fourth beast of Daniel 7, whom he identifies as Rome. [[17]](#footnote-17) Stefanovic, in his previously published book in 2009, also identifies the sea beast with “the papal ecclesiastical authoritarian rule that, having established itself as an institutional power in the sixth century, dominated the Western world in the name of heaven for more than twelve centuries.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

I have heard other interpretations of the characters in Revelation 17, which I will merely mention here: (1) woman and beast are both Babylon, (2) beast is ancient Rome, naming five or seven emperors, (3) beast is the Roman Church, naming five or seven popes. Although additional possible interpretations will likely come to mind, nevertheless, I will leave the focus of this introduction on the authors I have listed so far.

My goal is to simplify and enliven, in common language for preaching and teaching, the material I have gathered from many scholars over the years of my research, sort of like Clifford Goldstein does in his book, *1844 Made Simple.*[[19]](#footnote-19) Instead of trying to cite and converse with other authors at every turn, I will be fully occupied with describing and supporting my story, plot, and big picture thinking. I think this kind of thinking is sort of like what Eugene Boring calls for in his introduction, “Revelation was designed to be read aloud and heard all at once, in the context of worship (see on 1:3). This is not optional; the Apocalypse must be grasped as a whole . . . . It is a narrative, a drama with action and movement that conveys the message of each part within the context of the story in its totality.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

The Approach of This Proposal

I believe we come to any discussion event with very different points of view. That is because no piece of writing can give every detail of a character, a scene, or a movement, and every writing invites the reader to use his or her imagination to fill out the picture. It is in our human nature to crave completion of the picture, to find the patterns, to put together wholeness and congruence.

You complete a picture differently from the way I do. Your perspective, your angle of view is different from everyone else’s. A person’s interpretations will always agree with his or her point of view. I think perhaps our task here is each to do the best we can to explain our point of view to the others present.

English literature professors and students talk about point of view (POV) as either first person POV, second person POV, third person POV, or omniscient POV. In current social media, POV is a quick introductory statement of what just preceded the clip or what someone’s motive is in the video, or some other helpful piece of context. POV could be context or setting, motive or purpose, constraints or controls, presuppositions or pre-conclusions.

I will here give relevant pieces of my studied and chosen POV for this study. (1) I approach the Bible with a receptive attitude without suspicion and with exegesis. (2) I will use the historicist method, letting the prophecies and cosmic metanarrative stretch from before the creation of the earth to after sin, and letting the animals of Daniel show up again in Revelation. (3) I will stay in agreement with Ellen White in the writings published during her lifetime. (4) I will imaginatively stay as long as possible in the mind of the first century Christian, with only his past, and his oral and aural skills built strong in a time of great rhetoricians and scarcity of copied written texts. (5) Always my goal is to experience and then to preach Jesus Christ from a coherent plot in Daniel and Revelation.

Though I will lay out my experience in the Word, my testimony, as thoroughly as I can so others can understand it, I do not do this to persuade anyone else to my POV. Others with different points of view will experience the prophecies differently, and their testimony will be different from mine. Perhaps we will all turn out to be right in some way when we have the privilege of looking back.

In this paper I propose a clarifying approach. I hear the question reiterated whether we will interpret this or that section according to first century political events or whether some of Revelation will be available only to us from a perspective of the nineteenth century and later. In these questions, I think we have ignored the best interpretive guide available to us, that is, the hearing of each piece as the first hearers would have heard. It seems we focus on identifying the symbols from outside the picture, as if those first hearers were our lab rats from whom we collect data to boost our interpretation.

I want instead to use my imagination to become one of them and experience the hearing of the text from the inside of that audience. Some scholars have insisted that this or that interpretation must be consistent with first-century understandings; I say all of it must be. Let us go into the text with all our senses alive, aware of Roman corruption, demise, and persecution of Christians, benefiting from Greek and Roman culture and technology such as libraries and aqueducts, having absorbed by immersion in the culture both rhetorical skills and joy in oral communication, as well as steeped in the stories and language of the Old Testament and how those were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

My purpose in hearing in this way is not to discover the sources of John’s writing, not to show how many brilliant allusions John makes to something else, not to find “easter eggs” as if placed there for the joy of our discovery. Our purpose in hearing in this way is to attempt to hear and make meaning as if in the first century, letting the allusions wash over us and surface whatever memories they will, bringing into the hearing experience whatever comes up for us from the depths of who we are. We will not catch everything as we might if we stood outside the text with a fine-toothed comb. There will be another reading during which to catch more.

Since the puzzles of Revelation 17 seem variously related to the perspective in time from which they are viewed or shown, I intend to confine our view and clearly delineate its boundaries before beginning. I invite you to go along with me into the text, with only what John’s readers had, the Old Testament, the Gospel of Mark, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 John, Revelation 1-16, their own lived present moment and past memories in history, and the text that was being read to them, opening on scenes one sentence at a time. I will assume that this audience was adept at receiving oral and aural communications and listening for repeated sounds and scenes by which to organize the material heard.

The rules are these: (1) we may not jump ahead in the text, (2) we may not carry with us what we know of history or writings since John’s time, and (3) we may not grab a clue and jump back in the text hoping to unlock something previous, lest we miss the current reading. We will do our best to see and hear well as we go. We will come out of that excursion at the end of Revelation 17 to engage in discussion and then further discussion.

These rules relate to the fact that a large part of my logic will rest on verb tenses. We will notice five are fallen (past), one is (present) and the other is yet to come (future). We will also notice the one who was (past), is not (present), and will come up (future). I propose that these verb tenses represent real time and not merely a title by which to call something. I am comparing how God is called the one who was, is, and is to come (Rev 4:8; cf. Rev 1:4 for a different style), possibly as a title but also truly representing God’s eternal presence. I put forth that the verb tenses may be a poetic title and, at the same time, a true representation of time perspective.

Verb Tense as a Key Factor

In this paper, I propose that the present tense verbs in Revelation 17:8-11 are key to understanding the angel’s explanation, and that they occur simultaneously. The Greek behind the “is” and the “is not” (*estin* from *eimi*) clearly indicates existence or non-existence, in the present. The “is” and the “is not” participate in two very different but similar sequences. The “is,” as “one is,” centers between “five are fallen” and “the other is yet to come,” while the “is not” centers between “was” and “will come up.” Since their obvious present tense contrasts to past and future tenses in each respective sequence and both sequences appear in the same paragraph, it seems that the “is” and the “is not” are roughly simultaneous, occurring during a shared span of time.

In this view, if the “is” represents something in the time of John’s first readers, in the first century, then the “is not” must also be in place in the first century. If the “is” comes in our time, then the “is not” will also exist in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Someone counters that the “was and is not” is a title and not a reality of time. Let us review the name of which this seems to be a parody. The Lord God Almighty “was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). Since the order of the three verbs is not always the same (cf. Rev 1:4), thereby stylized as a title might be, I suggest this is more than a title. This is a real characterization, a persevering description, of who God is, asserting that God is always present, in the past, in the present, and in the future. In the parody form of Revelation 17:8, 11, the present tense “is” becomes “is not,” and the future tense “is to come” becomes “will ascend from the abyss” in one instance and “yet is” in the other instance. Let us examine whether this can be a real characterization, rather than merely a title, of the devil, God’s preeminent enemy.

In heaven, before the creation of this world Satan was, then he was not, and he is stubbornly insistent on returning to be in the place of the Most High (Isa 14:13-14). In Rome during Jesus ministry, Satan was active with his demons, then Jesus and the Christians pushed him back so he was not, but he will return (Mark 1:32, 34, 39; 3:15; 6:7 Luke 10:18; Rev 12:16). In France, Satan, as the beast that comes from the abyss, was active to support the supremacy of atheism in the revolutions, then disappeared again and was not, yet may still be active (Rev 11:7). He “was, is not, and yet is.” I propose that this is a persevering description, or real characterization, of the devil played upon by the rhetorician’s awareness and skill in the guide, as a parody of the characterization of God.

Another entity who could conceivably have this characteristic, “was, is not, and yet is,” would be the Roman Church who thrived for almost two millennia, received a deadly blow in 1798, during the French Revolution, and has been coming back since then. We will explore this option later.

Three options present themselves as the location in history for the present “is” and “is not” of Revelation 17:8-11. One possible temporal location is in the first century for the first readers and hearers of John’s material. A second possible location is in our time, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A third possible location lies in the future during the millennium. We will explore these options with the first option given more attention in this paper.

Speech, Imagery, and Plot Analysis

As hinted in the previous paragraphs, my clarification effort in this paper will use analysis of speech, imagery, and plot to illuminate the identities of the woman and the beast in Revelation 17.

Besides examining verb tenses in the speech of the text, we will consider the use of sounds in oral and aural communication, for both allusions and organizing tools.

Further, I have decided to read and speak the word “animal” in place of the word “beast.” I believe this word choice is more understandable and less connoted with violence than the speech we usually use. To understand the impact of my choice of words, one can watch a child saying action words with intonation and gestures that match the word. I believe our speech matters.

In imagery analysis, I have chosen to use words for the animals of Revelation 13 that describe how they look rather than their origins. For this reason, the “sea beast” becomes the patchwork animal, and the “earth beast” becomes the image-making animal. I do this to keep in the spotlight the ongoing elements of their identities.

Since most people, when hearing a story, automatically fill in details not explicitly given, and since each person fills in the picture differently, some of my presentation will show some of these details differently from those ubiquitous in Adventist slide shows. We will study each entity as a system or a super-system housing other systems, and we will show the impact of this imagery on understanding the development and disposition of that entity.

In this paper I will tell the story, the plot, of Revelation 17 at least three times, not for performance analysis, or oral to written source analysis, or to determine which clearly had oral origins. This is to inhabit the story with Jesus, to find meaning in Jesus. I believe that story and plot are powerful communication tools, unrolling the material more in surrounding ripples than in linear paths, helping us to see the movements in Revelation 17. Some of the attractiveness and effectiveness of story lies in the fact that a story, a plot, has a beginning, a struggle, a resolution, and an ending, unlike many of our daily frustrations that sometimes seem endless. A good story arouses anticipation at the beginning and fulfills it at the end, inviting the hearers to engage and participate by running ahead and trying to guess the next steps. I believe the story of our world and its rescue, as revealed in the book of Revelation, has the most exciting and engaging plot in the whole universe and invites study from both angels and humans.

The Story of Hearing Revelation 17

In this section, we will examine Revelation 17 in the order in which the characters take the center of attention, telling the story as if you and I were among the first hearers, in empathic solidarity with John. We will do this in full recognition that the first hearers were also filling in details not explicitly given, filling in the picture from their own point of view. Their POV would have included fear of Rome, both in its persecuting power and in its temptation to dilute the Christian message. Their POV would also have included a high respect for and familiarity with the Old Testament stories, themes, and prophecies. I choose to imagine with you being in a group of hearers more steeped in the Old Testament than in Roman power or Greek culture.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The Guide, Revelation 17:1-3a

Our guide is a plague angel. He has recently poured out God’s wrath on the world. Should we go with him? He promises to show us the judgment of the great fallen woman who sits on many waters, the one with whom kings of the earth have had sex, the one whose sexcapades have made drunk all people of the earth.

We remember that judgment has held a prominent place in this book this far. During the seals, people cried out for judgment to hurry (Rev 6:10). Then, via the first of three angels, God announced the hour of his judgment (Rev 14:7). The plagues themselves were judgments of God (Rev 15:4-6). This, following a plague-angel, may not be all bad for us who worship God.

We cannot take time here to ponder how a woman can sit on many waters. We do remember that the great animals Daniel saw in his dream came out of the water, and so did one of the three animals (or was it a dragon and two animals) that we heard of in this book of Revelation. With this background, the waters might give birth to empires. Given the guide’s wording, we expect to see a sexually fallen woman, a power broker among kings and over the general population.

We go with this plague-angel, and he carries us off into the desert. We are not afraid of the desert. We remember that both Moses and Elijah found safety, nourishment, and new revelation in the desert (Exod 3; 1 Kings 19). Israel left slavery in Egypt to go into the desert, protected and provided for by God, where they found new purpose and further revelation from God. Also, an unfallen woman we already heard about in this book found nourishment and help in the desert (Rev 12:14-16). The desert turns out to be a choice lookout point for seeing what comes next.

The Woman, Revelation 17:3b-6

Well, yes, she is indeed a fallen woman. The first thing we see, however, is the animal she rides. The animal is scarlet, and we already know the great red dragon is Satan with Rome, both effectively conquered by Jesus. Furthermore, we have already seen the animal who has many names of blasphemy. He was what we called the patchwork animal made up of all the animals in Daniel’s dream. He was not good. More shocking to us is the recognition of those ten horns as in Daniel’s dream, yet surely our guide will come back to this. He is moving on now to notice the woman.

She wears scarlet like the color of the dragon. She has her name on her forehead, like some of God’s people have God’s name on their foreheads (Rev 14:1). This is a different name, three names in one, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots.” The name Mystery makes me want to think and explore, because this is a book about revealing mysteries.

The name Babylon reminds me that we understood, in our hearing of the second of three angels of Revelation 14, that Babylon is religion that teaches or exemplifies the worship of self in arrogance against God. For instance, Babel was built to gather and defend humans against God (Gen 11). Later, Babylon’s king claimed to have built all his greatness by himself for his own glory (Dan 4). Another king of Babylon boasted he would exalt his throne and ascend to be like the Most High (Isa 14). We heard in Revelation 14, that Babylon, the religion of “I am god,” is fallen, broken, and proven false. Nevertheless, now in Revelation 17 we observe that she, Babylon is alive and well, and still abuses her people.

Babylon is gravid with her legacy, producing many fallen women. Our shock is compounded when we realize what is in her cup and that she is drunk with the blood of those she has tortured and killed. We are lost in the horror of this picture before our eyes. Our guide arrests our fainting spell. He will tell us the mystery of the woman and the animal she rides.

The Animal, Revelation 17:7-8

Our guide said he will tell us the mystery of the woman and of the animal who has seven heads and ten horns. We recognize the mark of seven and ten, ten horns like the dreadful animal of Daniel 7, like the dragon himself, like the patchwork animal, and supposedly like the statue or image of the patchwork animal that the two-horned animal made and enlivened. This scarlet animal has seven heads like the red dragon, like the patchwork animal, and like the image. Thus, to pick the outstanding descriptors to put in one sentence, we might say the red dragon and the three animals after him (counting the image in place of the two-horned animal) have ten horns and seven heads, which become landmark descriptors marking these animals as similar in some way.

Our guide says this animal was, is not, and will come up out of the abyss. In his identifying description of this animal, we notice our guide’s parody of the description of our Lord who was, and is, and is to come (Rev 4:8; compare, Rev 1:4). We remember another description of our Lord which neither this animal nor any other god or creature can successfully parody. Jesus said he is the one who lives, was dead, and is alive forevermore (Rev 1:18)! There is no God but ours who died for his people and is alive for his people. We spend a moment or two praising Jesus, the Lamb who was slain. This praise gives us strength to think again about the animal and the abyss.

Furthermore, we think of other comings and goings from the abyss. The angel who fell— not “came”—down from heaven was given—not “had”—a key to the abyss. He opened the abyss and let out smoke and locusts like scorpions. We think Satan, the angel who fell from heaven, would be the king of the abyss, whose name is “Destroyer” (Rev 9:1-3, 11). Later in this book of Revelation, an animal came up out of the abyss to kill God’s witnesses. That time, we heard no mention of name or heads or horns. His action spoke for who he was, Satan himself to kill the knowledge of God on earth (Rev 11:7), and earth dwellers partied and exchanged gifts out of joy for what he had done (Rev 11:10). He disappeared then, for a while, perhaps back to his place in the abyss to rethink and regroup. In Revelation 17, now he appears again.

When our guide says earth dwellers will worship this scarlet animal when they see him, we are reminded of the patchwork animal whom, it was said, earth dwellers will worship when they see him return healed from the wound that killed him (Rev 13:3). However, in both cases the ones who worship him are those whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8; 17:8). We feel relief to figure out that not all earth dwellers worship him, since the text assumes there are some names written in the book of life.

We want to review the origins of all the main animals we know from Daniel and Revelation. The four from Daniel 7 are: lion from the sea, bear from the sea, leopard from the sea, and dreadful animal from the sea. The three from Revelation 12-13 are: dragon from heaven, patchwork animal from the sea, and the image-making animal from the earth. We could understand these sources of origin to include the totality of God’s creation, heaven, earth, and sea, as involved, at least as interested spectators, in the last things on earth.

These many connections were brought to our minds when we saw the animal that was, and is not, and yet is. Then our guide changes his tone. I think we will get to the mystery, and maybe the judgment as we listen together through Revelation 17.

Seven Heads, Mountains, Kings, Revelation 17:9-11

The woman sits not only on many waters, but also on the scarlet animal, and also on its seven heads, which are seven mountains, and which are also seven kings. In this chapter I think we will pay close attention to the uses of the words “is” and “are.” We already noticed the “was” and “is not” of the scarlet animal. Now we will start noticing when the angel guide says something “is” or somethings “are.” This little piece about heads, mountains, and kings sounds like a complicated string of “are” instances: seven heads “are” seven mountains and “are” seven kings. We already know from Daniel that animals are kings and their kingdoms (Dan 7:17).

We already reviewed the seven animals in Daniel and Revelation, four from Daniel 7 and three from Revelation 12-13. Yes, we think they would be the seven kings, the seven heads of this animal. We already know who the ancient ones are: Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Rome used by Satan to kill Jesus. This is the direction of our minds when our guide says, “Of the seven kings, five are fallen, one is, and the other is yet to come.”

Count them. Ancient Babylon is fallen. Persia is fallen. Greece is fallen. What about the fourth one, Rome? Well, Caesar Agustus’ death in A.D. 14, could have been seen as the beginning of the end for Rome. Then when Jesus came and defeated Satan, that was the end of the fifth one, Satan through Rome. We recall how Mark’s record of Jesus’ life tells of so many instances where Jesus totally routed the devils that were bothering people. He gave authority over these unclean spirits to his disciples (Mark 6:7) so they too could send the devils away, and they took this authority all over the world. Satan is fallen. Five are fallen.

We consider the sixth head. We remember a letter we heard, written by Paul and addressed to the Thessalonians, and the words in that letter that strongly previewed the doings of the patchwork animal, and this scarlet animal, too. Paul wrote, “The mystery of iniquity is already at work” (2 Thess 2:7), and John has said, “Even now already is [the spirit of antichrist] in the world” (1 John 4:3). We could guess that is our sixth animal, the patchwork animal. This is the one who “is.”

Of seven heads, five are fallen; the sixth one is; and the other is yet to come. The animal whom Satan, through the patchwork animal, persuades to make an image of the patchwork animal is yet to come. These are the heads on the animal, and also the mountains and the kings. They teach us that God has a plan, and he will wait for the mystery of iniquity to show itself before the judgment can really happen.

We will remember to notice the tenses in the verbs of being to get the time perspective. In the next piece of this mystery, our guide tells us the animal that “was and is not” is the eighth. He abruptly leaves off the final word “animal” or “king,” leaving us to wonder which he is. That reminds me that we had noticed when the dragon first came on the scene that he was not called an animal. Now I think that is because the dragon is not really a human system. He can be called a king, head, or mountain but not an animal, according to this guide’s thinking. We will take the dragon out of the line-up for the animals and when we do that, the scarlet animal becomes the seventh, that is one “of the seven,” as I heard the guide say.

1. Lion, Babylon, fallen

2. Bear, Persia, fallen

3. Leopard, Greece, fallen

4. Dreadful Animal, Rome, fallen

5. Dragon, Satan through Rome, fallen, “was”

6. Patchwork Animal, “is,” (Dragon “is not”)

7. Image-Making Animal, “other yet to come”

8. Scarlet Animal, “will come up from the abyss,” “yet is,” “goes to perdition”

Ten Kings, Revelation 17:12-14

We remember that this scarlet animal was first introduced as having seven heads and ten horns which reminded us of the dragon, the patchwork animal, and the image that the other animal made. We think the seven heads and ten horns are an identifying factor of some sort. So far, we have investigated the heads and have yet to hear about the horns. Our guide says the horns are ten kings.

We will not confuse these kings with the heads/mountains/kings we examined a minute ago. These kings are ten, not seven. These ten kings have no kingdoms as yet, while the seven kings begin with ancient kingdoms and run consecutively. These ten will be kings for a short time and will empower the scarlet animal together with them to fight the Lamb. We remember we heard about ten horns on that dreadful animal from Daniel 7. We wonder if they will be other kings than those of Rome, achieving their kingdoms one day in the future.

Our guide insists that the Lamb they fight is the Lord above all lords and the King above all kings, and that those with him are very special, called out from Babylon, and full of the faith of Jesus. We are filled with joy at the mention of this Lamb and his followers.

The Woman Again, Revelation 17:15-18

We still have not seen the judgment of the great fallen woman, promised to us when we first started to follow this guide. Perhaps this is the time.

Our guide, still explaining, returns to the phrase that we skipped over at the beginning, the many waters where the woman sits. He says they are multitudes of people of all families and languages. It seems these are not kingdoms or systems as the animals and heads and horns are. These are many individual people. The woman, Babylon, sits on multitudes of individuals. She is supported by the people, and we wonder if we will see that she even treads on and crushes people.

Here then is her judgment. The ten kings, with the scarlet animal, will turn on the woman because they will hate her. They will desolate her, tear her clothes from her, eat her, and burn her with fire. Under God’s restraint, they will give their kingdoms to the scarlet animal until God’s words are finished. Interesting, is it not, that Satan will not tolerate even a great system of false worship if not fully directed toward himself.

We notice that, since the introduction of the ten horns, all the verbs have been in the future tense, and thus after the time when the scarlet animal “is not.” Our conclusions are cautious about future predictions. Our guide then reiterates, with present-tense verbs, that the woman is the great city, the ruler over the kings of earth.

By means of this story, I have shown the two major characters in Revelation as ancient Babel and Babylon, with their God-usurping policies, on the one hand, and that ancient serpent called Satan, with his hatred of Jesus, on the other hand. I see both characters active now and intertwining in various ways to develop exponentially, and finally to be conquered by the Lamb Jesus Christ.

Discussion Supporting this View

Now is the time to explain a few more ideas about the following items as regards the interpretation of Revelation 17: Animals and Empires, Listening from Within the Audience, Verb Tenses, Systems, Sounds, Jon Paulien, Allusions, and Ellen White, with some Lessons for the Present.

Examining the verb tenses and studying sounds in oral and aural communication is what I mean by speech analysis. A discussion of systems will explain my work with imagery analysis. The instances in this proposal in which I tell the story is part of what I mean by plot analysis. More and broader plot analysis awaits in the sequel to this paper

In some ways, I have changed my mind since publishing my first book on Revelation in 2022. When I wrote that book, I believed that the present tense verbs, “is” of the sixth head and “is not” of the scarlet animal had to place them both together far in the future from John’s time and I gave my rationale.[[22]](#footnote-22) In this paper I propose to track completely with the verb tenses in the angel’s explanations, as if in John’s time.

Animals and Empires

Here now, I will present the animals and empires as I propose them. This chart of Revelation 17 is a copy of Appendix I: Revelation 17.

**Revelation 17**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Animal | System Name | Seven Heads, Mtns, Kings | Eighth \_\_\_\_\_\_  Scarlet Animal | Disposition |
| 1. Lion | Babylon | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged  Dan 7:12.  Became part of Patchwork Animal.  Became whore of Dragon, Patchwork Animal, and Image Animal.  Destroyed by ten horns. |
| 2. Bear | Persia | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged.  Became part of Patchwork Animal. |
| 3. Leopard | Greece | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged.  Became part of Patchwork Animal |
| 4. Dreadful | Roman Empire | Fallen |  | Slain, burned  Dan 7:11.  Subsumed in Dragon and burned at same time. |
| 5. Dragon | Satan through Rome | Fallen | Related to Dreadful Animal Dragon “Was” | Related to Dreadful Animal.  To Lake of Fire  Rev 20:10. |
| 6. Patchwork | Roman Church,  Medieval Authoritarian Systems | “Is” | Patchwork  Dragon “Is not” | Animal to the Lake of Fire  Rev 19:20. |
| 7. Image | Protestantism,  Enlightenment Separated Systems | “Other yet to come” | Image  Dragon “Is not” | False Prophet to Lake of Fire  Rev 19:20 |
| 8. Scarlet | Satan’s System |  | “Will Come up,”  “Yet is,” “Goes  to Perdition” | Fights the Lamb,  Animal to the Lake of Fire |

In the first row, see Babylon and follow over to the last column to observe her career. Rows two and three are similar to each other and simpler than Babylon. In row four, for disposition, I have the dreadful animal subsumed in the dragon and burned in the fire.

Row five shows Satan observable in the Roman Empire during the life of Jesus on earth. This was the fifth head, all five fallen, and also the “was” time of the scarlet animal as shown in columns three and four. This proposed line-up of the five fallen differs from the good work of many Adventist scholars who begin the list with empires before Babylon.[[23]](#footnote-23) Babylon is the beginning of the succession in my proposal. We will return later to column four.

In row six appears the patchwork animal, often called the sea beast to designate its origin. This animal wears, as a patchwork disguise, the animals of Daniel’s dream. This animal carries the present-tense “is” of the seven heads (see column three), already present in John’s time (2 Thess 2:7). This is the first, then, that I will name in retrospect from our time rather than from the perspective of John’s readers.

Besides calling out the Roman Church with this patchwork animal, I will name this patchwork animal Medieval Authoritarian Systems, following suggestions I picked up from Ranko Stefanovic.[[24]](#footnote-24) These authoritarian systems would include both Roman and Orthodox Churches and Islam. Watching expanding global developments, I want to reach farther than an exclusive focus on the Roman Church, though it will still be included, as flagship of Medieval Authoritarian Systems.

In row seven appears the animal who makes the image to the patchwork animal. We assume the image has seven heads and ten horns that identify him closely with the Dragon and the patchwork animal.

Besides calling out United States Protestantism with this animal, I will name this image-making animal Enlightenment Separated Systems for the totally new big idea of separation of church and state which helped create the United States and other countries who copied her. These Enlightenment Separated Systems include and are not limited to various ecclesiastical, corporate, political, labor, social, education, and family systems. Protestant churches are included as nameplate for the Enlightenment Separated Systems.

In row eight is the animal of Revelation 17, called a scarlet animal. The seven heads and ten horns identify this animal with the dragon, the patchwork animal, and the image. The primary identifying note of this animal is that he was, is not, and yet is, while coming from the abyss.

Listening from Within the Audience

In this paper, listeners are invited to use imagination to place themselves among the first hearers of John’s letter, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. They will seek to feel the corruption and devolution of the Roman Empire after the passing of Caesar Augustus. They will feel the shudders as receiving news of Christians being persecuted and killed for their faith. These listeners will have benefitted from the roads, mail system, libraries, aqueducts, baths, and debates of Rome’s advanced technology. They will imagine what it would be like to have learned to talk and express their emotions amidst the rhetorical skills and sounds of the Roman and Jewish orators. They will dive deep into the language and imagery of the Old Testament and study how those were being taught as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

I believe more was available to the first hearers than we usually allow or contemplate. I present two principles that will impact their interpretation of what they hear in ways we may not have considered. As they hear and interpret the reading, they will see their own time more readily in the reading and taking a larger portion of the reading. Hence, the first hearers might apply something starting in their time farther into what we know now as an extended future. They could have known that the antichrist spirit present in their day would extend to the end of time.

Also, I believe their minds would turn most readily to Scriptures and happenings of their own time over those from the distant past. They would have recognized that Rome was as good as finished and that the Lord had conquered the dragon devil, and these would have been drafted into the interpretation of the reading of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In this way, today’s listener can use imagination to sit among the first hearers, within the audience, to hear how the major animals in Daniel and Revelation would have been the most likely composition of the five fallen and the seven with an eighth.

Verb Tenses at Work

Now please return to examine column four in light of its verb tenses as part of our speech analysis. Perhaps it is clear so far that the dragon as Rome with Satan is the system of the past in the time of John’s readers. It is past because of Jesus’ and the apostles’ victory over Satan and the already begun slow decline of the Roman Empire after Caesar Augustus. The dragon/Satan carries a verb in the past tense relative the time of John’s readers.

The time of the Medieval Authoritarian Systems carries the verb in the present tense to say the dragon “is not.” Mark’s Jesus gave his people authority over the devil (Mark 3:15; 6:7), and Luke’s Jesus said he saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven (Luke 10:18). I believe the time of the Enlightenment Separated Systems also carries that same present tense “is not” of the dragon because this is the time that the earth helped the woman (Rev 12:16). The dragon “is not.”

Then the scarlet animal carries the verb tense of the future. He “will come up from the abyss.” Well, he fell from heaven and received a key to the abyss (Rev 9:1-2), and he came up from the abyss to kill the two witnesses (Rev 11:7). These appearances were very short with truncated descriptions as if he was not yet ready to show his full self and plan. Here he is, yet to come in Revelation 17, the fully decorated, fully concocted, scarlet animal.

Systems

Now we will pull this description together in terms of the systems at work, using imagery analysis to see how the animals work in the story. The dragon/Satan is the “was,” he is the “is not,” and he is also the animal who comes up from the abyss in Revelation 17. I will be careful in this assertion not to appear close to the futurist, or rapture, interpretation in which this animal is Satan himself, one charismatic individual. All these animals since Daniel’s writing have been systems, not merely one person. In my teaching, I have been very careful always to talk about the system rather than the pope or emperor. When I talk about Satan in Revelation 17, I mean a system.

Finally, Satan will have perfected his system on earth. He tried with each of Daniel’s animals. He tried with the patchwork animal. He tried with the image-making animal. Finally, he will have earned the place among the “animals,” or human kingdoms, while back in Revelation 12, he was not called an animal (system), but only a dragon. Now in Revelation 17 he will have his own system, not only Satan coming in some magic way, but a whole human kingdom and system waiting for him. He will have earned the angel’s description, “was, is not, and yet is,” since he has been building this system in his workshop of the ages. He ends up being the eighth and of the seven.

The hearers in John’s day must have been relieved to know that the devil “was and is not,” which is the guide’s final designation for him in this chapter (Rev 17:11). The readers in John’s day had no way of knowing the trauma of what Satan had already put in his place.

A system, as I intend to use the word, has hierarchy, payroll, place, authority, and things. A system can be a corporation, a nation, a city, a church, a non-government organization, or any other organization—even a whole society. A system might have its own close of probation and destruction at separate times from other systems or from its people. A system is noted in Revelation 17 by images like woman, beast, kings, mountains, heads, or city.

People beneath or outside the bureaucracy could be described as “inhabitants of the earth,” “those that dwell on the earth,” and waters which are “people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

Those who are with Jesus the Lamb are described as “saints,” “witnesses,” “called, chosen, and faithful.” Their system, having been outlawed by both the religious system and the godless system, these have no large system, no overarching bureaucracy, no place of their own, but only groups of believers with Jesus the Lamb as their all-sufficient leader, guide, and shelter.

Systems contain systems. Systems umbrella other systems. A super system has all the facets of a system while being complex enough to house many other systems, all working their own mission with their own hierarchy, in a hierarchy of systems and purposes. If the super system were to come on hard times and dissolve, the participating systems might carry on again separately for a time. For illustration of a super system, imagine you see a child’s lunch box breaking open and spilling bags, boxes, cartons, and cans, as well as loose bananas and apples on the floor. There were individuals and systems within the lunch-box super system, and when the super system broke, the smaller systems and individuals were set free and operated on their own.

The Roman church is notable for making a place in its “super system” for many religious orders, about 2,500 such systems around the world now, each operating according to its founders’ vision, policies, and religious habits.[[25]](#footnote-25) In Revelation 17, we see two super systems: Babylon, super swarming with all other religious systems large and small, and the scarlet animal with tyrannical control over all godless national, business, or societal structures and endeavors. It seems that Babylon might like to subsume the scarlet animal, too, but he turns on her and destroys her. It is the system holding them all together that is destroyed. When a super system is destroyed it releases all the subsystems and loose individuals to be subsumed somewhere else.

For a very short time, then, Satan will have his kingdom, every previous system, and every people and nation and tongue under his godless, super system, and obligated sufficiently to keep them in order. Neither the woman Babylon nor the scarlet animal survive to be thrown into the lake of fire. That is because they are super systems and can be torn apart releasing the dragon, the patchwork animal, and the false prophet image-making animal to the lake of fire.

To be an animal in Revelation 17, Satan needs a system with hierarchy, payroll, place, authority, and things. He is building that system right now to have it ready then. Each system on earth, every corporation, church, government, and other organization, will choose to be umbrellaed by either the beast or the woman. Individuals all over the earth will choose associations that matter, with either the beast or the woman or the Lamb.

Sounds

Since what is written in Revelation was likely meant to be read aloud to people gathered to hear, then factors of oral delivery and aural reception come into play in both the author’s shaping of the message and the auditor’s comprehension of the message. Scholars sometimes mention the author’s intention without much consideration that part of his intention is effective oral delivery. We sometimes cite the first readers without noticing that they were first “hearers,” affected by the oral skills of their times and by those of the orator. I will barely scratch the surface of the studies possible in the realm of oral and aural communication. We will examine the use of sounds and repetition of sounds in oral and aural communication as part of our speech analysis

Simple observation shows that, for anyone who talks, the message receives impact from meter, that is, the pattern of syllabic emphasis created by the choice of words and their order. Tempo, how fast the meter marches; pitch, how high or low on a musical scale; volume, how loud or soft the sound; and all changes in these factors take their place as part of the communication. These do not come through in translation.

Further, assonance and alliteration, that is, similar sounds repeated, and hiatus, that is, a stop of breath between two similar sounds like “cooperate” and “the eternal,” ––all these give the communication its feel and become part of its emotional impact. None of these yield their charm easily to the translator.

All we have are words and word order with their repetitions and patterns. We miss meter, tempo, pitch, volume, assonance, alliteration, and hiatus, and all changes in these. In this way, the major part of any message in the book of Revelation is beyond our reach. Despite all this missing, I believe there is enough for us. Yet I believe the humility of smallness is required for our interpretations, always.

For these reasons, we will discuss sounds and repetition of sounds. Margaret Ellen Lee and Bernard Brandon Scott in their 2009 book, *Sound Mapping the New Testament*, cite the “primary dynamic that organized compositions for their ancient author and audiences—that of sound.”[[26]](#footnote-26) George A. Kennedy in his 1984 book, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism,* cautions,

“It should be kept in mind that a speech or a text read aloud is presented linearly: the audience hears the words in progression without opportunity to review what has been said earlier, and an orally received text is characterized by a greater degree of repetition than is a text intended to be read privately. The New Testament was intended to be received orally and abounds in repetition.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

We will discuss words and word order with their sound repetitions and patterns. We will use a chart I made of some words in various parts of Revelation that are repeated in Revelation 17, to illustrate various observations about words, word order, and their repetitions and patterns. In this chart, I have italicized words that are the same or from the same root in Greek, so we can discuss the repetition experiences that the first hearers had, even though they experienced the sound repetitions in a different language.

**Repetition of Sounds from All of Revelation in Revelation 17**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 1:4; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5 *is, was* | 17:8-11 *was, is* not |
| 2 | 3:5; 13:8 *book of life* | 17:8; 20:12; 21:27 *book of life* |
| 3 | 6:9; 11:7 *testimony* which they held  11:3 my two *witnesses*  12:17; 19:10 *testimony* of Jesus  20:4 the *witness* of Jesus | 17:6 the *martyrs* of Jesus |
| 4 | 9:1-2; 11:7; 20:1 *bottomless pit* | 17:8 *bottomless pit* |
| 5 | 11:7 *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit* | 17:8 *The beast* that thou sawest . . . *shall ascend out of the bottomless pit* |
| 6 | 12:3; 13:1 red dragon with *seven heads and ten horns* | 17:3 Scarlet beast with *seven heads and ten horns* |
| 7 | 12:6, 14 *woman* fled to *wilderness* | 17:3 to the *wilderness*, saw *woman* |
| 8 | 12:11 *blood* of the Lamb, word of their *testimony* | 17:6; 18:24 *blood* of the saints and of the *witnesses* |
| 9 | 12:12 has but a *short* time | 17:10 continue a *short* space |
| 10 | 12:17 dragon makes *war*  19:11 in righteousness he makes *war* | 17:14 ten horns make *war* with the Lamb |
| 11 | 13:1 *seven heads, ten horns, name of blasphemy* | 17:3 *names of blasphemy, seven heads, ten horns* |
| 12 | 13:8 *not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world* | 17:8 *not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world* |
| 13 | 13:8; 21:27 not *written in the book of life* | 17:8 not *written in the book of life* |
| 14 | 16:1 *seven angels, vials* | 17:1 *seven angels, vials* |
| 15 | 18:3 all nations have *drunk* of the *wine* of the wrath *of her fornication* | 17:2 inhabitants of the earth have been made *drunk* with the *wine of her fornication* |
| 16 | 18:3, 9 *kings of the earth have committed fornication* with her | 17:2 with whom the *kings of the earth have committed fornication* |
| 17 | 18:8 *burn her with fire* | 17:16 utterly *burned with fire* |
| 18 | 18:24 *blood of saints* | 17:6 *blood of saints* |
| 19 | 19:6 voice of *many waters* | 17:1, 15 woman sits on *many waters* |
| 20 | 19:16; 1:15 upon his vesture and thigh a *name written*  21:12 gates with *names written* | 17:5 upon her forehead a *name written* |
| 21 | 21:9 *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 thee* | 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 show thee* |
| 22 | 21:10 *he carried me away in the spirit* | 17:3 *he carried me away in the spirit* |

For the auditors in oral communication, the significance of a repeated sound pattern, or word series, is enhanced if the word series is robust, that is, three or more words in order, and if the word series is unique, that is, used only in the two or three instances considered to be parallel. For example, on row 9, with only the word “short” in common, the set is a weak instance of repetition; whereas row 21 has a very robust group of words in common and would signal some purpose for the two visions so introduced to recall one another.

For another example, row 12 is unique in Revelation; however, a glance at rows 13 and 2 show that pieces of that series of words are not unique in Revelation, and this must be considered in any assessment of this set of sound repetitions. Row 16 is certainly not a unique use of the phrase “kings of the earth,” since that phrase appears nine times in Revelation (Rev 1:5; 6:15; 16:14; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24). At least two of those instances are kings that honor God and Christ. There may be ten “kings of the earth” in some instances, but these would be not all of them and by no means a stable stable of them. Thus the phrase “kings of the earth” is not unique enough to recall anything very specific.

Two Functions of Sound Repetitions

At least two uses of repetition in sound patterns can be described for oral and aural communication. First, an auditor hears while moving in linear fashion through the message and uses repeated sounds to discover its organization, outline, emphasis, and plot for effective comprehension.

I understand that ancient people, dependent as they were on oral and aural communication, were much more aware of words and repetitions of sound than we are.[[28]](#footnote-28) Lee and Scott viewed repetition as “sound’s primary structuring device.”[[29]](#footnote-29) They concluded, “A visual chart of repeated sounds and sound patterns presents to the eye testimony originally designed for the ear.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Sound in verbal repetitions was not merely a mnemonic device; it was an organizing tool for aural comprehension. This organizing use of verbal repetition in Revelation for ordering and outlining will wait to be further examined in the sequel to this paper.

In the present discussion, the second use of repetition in sound patterns is for allusion. Allusions are included in a text for any of several purposes. First, allusions can showcase the literary expertise of the author. Second, allusions can enrich, ornament, or familiarize the text to its audience, as in row 7, where the desert, or wilderness, first is a place of protection and provision for the woman and, when it is heard again in connection with a woman, the audience might feel more ready to hear the new information.

Third, allusions can bring past context forward, as in row 4 and then rows 5 and 11, where the bottomless pit let loose demonic beings and a killing animal, and where the dragon and his first animal had seven heads and ten horns. In this case the sound repetitions might bring all that previous context to bear on identity and expectations of the scarlet animal.

Fourth, allusions can provide comedy by parody or ridicule, as in row 1. The guide’s delightful use of parody, or ironic allusion, in calling the beast “the one who was, and is not, and will come” is of course an allusion to God, “the one who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). This appears to be an ironic allusion, adding but one word to show the utter incompetence and insufficiency of this animal next to God. I wonder if this guide’s eyes were twinkling as he said it, three times. I wonder if he also thought of the allusion to who Jesus is, “the one who lives, was dead, and is alive forevermore” (Rev 1:18). Since this parody was spoken by the guide and never claimed by the animal in this text, I conclude that it was created to support and smile for God and Jesus, and certainly not to claim any sameness of identity between the scarlet animal and God.

Fifth, allusions may help identify a character according to its antecedent or even by a future storm brewing in the character’s present existence. In the section that follows this one, we will compare allusions in the presentations of the three women in the last half of the book of Revelation to help in our identifying the woman Babylon.

Jon Paulien, in his landmark dissertation, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12,* studied the methods of identifying allusions in Revelation to parts of the Old Testament. Of course, the target of the allusion must appear before the allusion, available to the current author.[[31]](#footnote-31) Paulien identified three factors, words, ideas, and structures, which, if parallel, add to the probability that any an allusion is at work.[[32]](#footnote-32) Therefore, if any repeated word series is to be considered an allusion, it will manifest verbal repetitions, scenes and themes in common, and similar structures. The more clearly and definitely these show themselves, the more likely that the author meant an allusion and that the first audience understood the allusion.

Let us still be cautious, however, because an allusion may indicate either admiration or rivalry, (row 21) or the same individual (not row 11). An allusion may signify affirming, undermining, or codependent behavior. An allusion may show collusion (row 6), competition, or contrasts (row 19). The interpreter’s point of view will always impact his or her understanding of an allusion. Therefore, it is best to hold one’s conclusions lightly because someone else’s contrasting conclusion might end up being as true as one’s own.

Allusions

For help to discover the identity of the woman named Babylon, now we will examine some of the allusions seen in verbal repetitions connected to Revelation 17. Some hints have risen among us that Babylon could be seen as the woman dressed in the sun from Revelation 12, having fallen into degradation.[[33]](#footnote-33) We want to explore exactly how the allusions might identify Babylon’s antecedents in the text. I have listed in this chart some of the verbal repetitions from Revelation 12, 13, 17-18, 19-21 for ease in comparison. I numbered the rows for ease in reference.

**Antecedents to, and Rivalries of, the Woman**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Babylon in Rev 11, 17-18 | Woman in Rev 12 | Animal in Rev 13 | Lamb in Rev 19, 20 | Bride in Rev 19, 21-22 |
| 1 | *One of the seven angels who had seven vials came and talked with me, Come, I will show you* (17:1) |  |  |  | *One of the seven angels who had seven vials came and talked with me, Come, I will show you* (21:9) |
| 2 | *Carried me away in the spirit* (17:3) |  |  |  | *Carried me away in the spirit* (21:10) |
| 3 | Into the *wilderness*, . . . saw a *woman* (17:3),  *great city* (17:18) | *Woman* fled into the *wilderness*, . . that they should feed her there (12:6, 14) |  |  | To a great and high mountain, and showed me that *great city* (21:10) |
| 4 | A scarlet-colored beast full of *names of blasphemy,* having *seven heads and ten horns* (17:3) | A great red dragon *having* *seven heads and ten horns* (12:3) | Animal rose out of the sea *having seven heads and ten horns, and the name of blasphemy.* (13:1) |  |  |
| 5 | They *that dwell on the earth* shall wonder, *whose names were not written in the book of life* *from the foundation of the world* (17:8) |  | All *that dwell upon the earth* shall worship him, *whose names are not written in the book of life* of the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world* (13:8) |  | *Written in the book of life* (21:27) |
| 6 | *Here is the mind that hath wisdom* (followed by a riddle) (17:9) |  | *Here is wisdom* Let him that *hath understanding* (followed by a riddle) (13:18) |  |  |
| 7 | Woman sits on *many waters* (17:1, 15) |  |  | Voice of *many waters* (19:6) |  |
| 8 | *Kings of the earth* committed fornication (17:2, 18; 18:3, 9) |  |  | *Kings of the earth* to make war against him (19:19) | *Kings of the earth* bring their glory (21:24) |
| 9 | *Arrayed* in purple and scarlet (17:4) | *Clothed* with the sun (12:1) |  | *Clothed* with a vesture dipped in blood (19:13) | *Arrayed* in fine linen, clean and white (19:8) |
| 10 | Upon her forehead a *name written* (17:5) |  |  | Upon his vesture and thigh a *name written* (19:16) | Gates with *names written* (21:12) |
| 11 | *Blood* of the saints and of the *witnesses* (17:6; 18:24) | *Blood* of the Lamb, word of their *testimony* (12:11) |  |  |  |
| 12 | Continue a *short* space (17:10) | Has but a *short* time (12:12) |  |  |  |
| 13 | Ten horns make *war* with the Lamb (17:14) | Dragon makes *war* (12:17) |  | In righteousness he makes *war* (19:11) |  |
| 14 | Clothed in fine *linen* and purple and scarlet (18:16) |  |  | Armies in *fine linen*, white and *clean* (19:14) | Arrayed in *fine linen*, *clean* and white (19:8) |
| 15 | Decked with *gold* and *precious stones* (18:16) |  |  |  | *Gold*, and garnished with *precious stones* (21:18-19) |
| 16 | *Light* of a *candle* no more (18:23) |  |  |  | Need no *candle* nor *light* of the sun (22:5) |
| 17 |  | On her *head* a crown (12:1) |  | On his *head* many crowns (19:12) |  |
| 18 |  | Child was to *rule all nations with a rod of iron* (12:5) |  | *Rule the nations with a rod of iron* (19:15) |  |
| 19 |  | Devil having great *wrath*, Dragon *angry* (12:12,17) |  | *Fierceness* and *wrath* of Almighty God (19:15) |  |
| 20 |  | Clothed with the *sun*  (12:1) |  |  | No need of the *sun* (22:5) |
| 21 |  | *Twelve* stars (12:1) |  |  | *Twelve* gates, *twelve* angels, *twelve* tribes, *twelve* foundations, *twelve* apostles (21:12, 14) |
| 22 |  | *Water* as a *flood* after the woman (12:15) |  |  | Pure *river* of *water* of life from the throne (22:1) |

Rows 1 through 6 consist of verbal repetitions that have three or more words in a row in common. These would appear to be much stronger and more noticeable than others, causing the first hearers to flag them and causing later readers to study them. Rows 7 through 22 have one or two words in common requiring study to understand why the author may have instituted that repetition. I believe they are worth many sermons.

Rows 1 and 2 are the reason I first began to intuit that there is rivalry going on between Babylon and the bride of the Lamb. The author invested great effort in helping the hearer and reader to notice that the outcomes for the two women were so thoroughly opposite that they could be expressed in similar words and scenes. In the same setting and continuation of scene, in row 2, the prophet was carried away first to the desert or wilderness and second to a great and high mountain. Set in the same words of introduction, the prophet ended up in very different observation positions. Furthermore, he saw very different scenes. First, from the desert outlook, he saw a still snapshot of entities very prone to move about, the woman and the animal. Second, from the mountain overlook, he saw a video of motion in a thing more likely to be immovable, a city descending.

It seems to me that the text does not require that what the prophet saw next in Revelation 17 was actually happening in the desert. No one assumes that the Holy City was actually descending in or on the great and high mountain. The mountain was only the lookout point. It would seem that the desert was similarly the best and safest lookout point for seeing the scarlet animal and the woman Babylon wherever they were staging up after the scarlet animal came up from the abyss. The text does not indicate that the scene was in the same place as the seer, neither the scene of the woman seen from the desert nor the scene of the Holy City seen from the mountain.

One can notice more scenes and themes that show either copycatting or obvious opposites in similar words between Babylon and the bride. From a study of these repetitions, I believe there was a rivalry and competition brewing in Revelation 17, and that is what most astonished the prophet.

In row 3, the woman dressed in the sun from Revelation 12 found safety and nourishment in the desert, while the woman Babylon in Revelation 17 is visible from a lookout in the desert. The verbal repetitions shown in row 3, seem to me so weak as to be hardly even a possible target of an allusion.

Rows 4, 5, and 6 highlight a set of strong allusions to the patchwork animal of Revelation; however, these allusions concern the scarlet animal and not the woman. Both the patchwork animal in Revelation 13 and the scarlet animal of Revelation 17 had seven heads, ten horns, and a name, or names, of blasphemy. The people who admired or worshiped them in both cases are those whose names are not in the book of life. Further, they each embody a riddle that calls for wisdom. These three strong allusions tell us nothing about the woman. They do show us the identification markers that tie the patchwork animal of Revelation 13 to the scarlet animal of Revelation 17, and together to the dragon. These identifying markers are the seven heads and ten horns, caried by a dragon and two animals.

It seems to me that further exegesis in the remaining rows on this chart would be interesting and preachable.

The allusions suggested in this chart seem to tell me that both the woman dressed in the sun and the bride seek true connection with the Lamb, while the woman Babylon seeks only seductive connection with the Lamb. Based on the verbal, scene, and theme evidence presented here, and because the text does not clarify that the woman dressed in the sun becomes the woman named Babylon, I propose that the woman dressed in the sun and the bride could be the same person, but not so with the woman dressed in the sun and Babylon.

Recognizing the complexity of connections between the women in Revelation, Jon Paulien commented recently, “The female imagery of Rev 12, 17, and 21 is interlinked in some detail. I suppose what one does with that is where the interpreter's point of view comes in.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Indeed, we each do fill in details when we see only part of a picture, and Revelation, by its profuse use of imagery, invites the reader and hearer to imagine. It is inevitable that a person’s imagination within his or her point of view will supply details not given in the text. It seems to me to be important that we keep sorting in thought and conversation what comes from the text and what we filled in, then that we maintain a loose hold and lax persuasion on what we filled in.

Here I will propose my own thematic allusion, that as Babylon is the mother of harlots and, in the end, they all unite, so the woman dressed in the sun is the mother of the remnant and, in the end, one with them and a summation of them. How can this be, especially if the woman dressed in the sun becomes the bride, the mother wedding her son? It is possible because she is the church and the church spans generations, existing over centuries, as does her son (see Rows 18-20 above).

Ellen White

Since Ellen White’s recorded opinion on the identity of the woman and the scarlet animal shaped my thinking and that of many, this discussion will now address three pieces from her pen and then tell a compiled and condensed biography of the scarlet animal. White wrote, in 1888, regarding the patchwork animal, “This symbol [referencing Rev 13:1-10, the patchwork animal], as most Protestants have believed, represents the papacy”[[35]](#footnote-35) Then in 1899, she wrote, regarding Babylon, “Thus [referencing Rev 17:1-4, Babylon] is represented the papal power . . . What is it that gives its kingdom to this power? Protestantism” (Letter 232, 1899).[[36]](#footnote-36) In 1891, she wrote “Thus [referencing Rev 17:13-14, the scarlet animal with horns] is manifested the same arbitrary, oppressive power against religious liberty, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, as was manifested by the papacy” (MS 24, 1891).[[37]](#footnote-37) It is clear that Ellen White believed the patchwork animal is the Roman Church, and the woman, Babylon, is the Roman Church re-energized by returning Protestantism.

As far as I can tell, however, White stopped short of identifying the scarlet animal to be one and the same as the patchwork animal or even identifying one as a resurrected or returning form of the other. She claimed only that the scarlet animal “manifested the same arbitrary, oppressive power against religious liberty, freedom to worship God according the dictates of conscience as was manifested” by the patchwork animal.

It does not seem to be required by the text or by Ellen White that “wounded to death and healed” must belong to “was, is not, and will come.” Similarities to the scarlet animal’s characteristics are scattered generously among the three animals of Revelation 11, 12, and 13, and not so much focused on one of them.

We will consider these similarities using two examples of robust possible allusions in Revelation 17. We will remember that allusions need not indicate that the two entities are the same. Allusions can show hostility or envy as easily as sameness or collaboration. The first robust allusion to a previous animal in Revelation is on row 5 on this excerpt from an earlier chart, the mention of coming up from the abyss. This is a robust and unique repetition of words. My POV allows these animals to be the same, with one of them yet immature.

**Excerpt from Chart: Repetition of Sounds form all of Revelation in Revelation 17**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5 | 11:7 *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit* | 17:8 *The beast* that thou sawest . . . *shall ascend out of the bottomless pit* |
| 11 | 13:1 *seven heads, ten horns, name of blasphemy* | 17:3 *names of blasphemy, seven heads, ten horns* |
| 12 | 13:8 *not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world* | 17:8 *not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world* |
| 13 | 13:8; 21:27 not *written in the book of life* | 17:8 not *written in the book of life* |

The second robust allusion in Revelation 17 to a previous animal in Revelation is to the patchwork animal in Revelation 13, seen in rows 11, 12, and 13. My POV does not make these allusions mean the same animal. Instead, I see the dragon calling up the patchwork animal who has the marker seven heads and ten horns, then inciting the next animal to get the world to make an image of him, presumably with the identifying marker seven heads and ten horns, and then producing his final and best copy of himself in the scarlet animal with the marker seven heads and ten horns.

Given what we have observed in this paper with Ellen White’s contribution, I will now re-tell the story of the scarlet animal, all in literary and poetic past tense, since I expect to tell this story some day from the perspective of eternity in the future.

The Story of Satan

This and the two other stories in this paper, one at the beginning and one at the end, will be part of my plot analysis of Revelation 17. There is a sequel to this paper that will expand plot analysis quite beyond this.

Satan tried at Babel, and through all the centuries before Jesus came, to turn humans away from God and help them build systems of hierarchies and infrastructure to keep their people in line. When Jesus appeared, so did Satan, everywhere he could in the Roman Empire. After Satan killed Jesus, and found himself beaten back, he started a different tack, a church that would have its system to mislead its people. That worked for more than a thousand years and its teaching that the dead do not really die left an additional door open for Satan to contact some people directly, as if their beloved dead could return to them or converse with them.

Then the Enlightenment happened, and people protested the Roman Church. Satan appeared, his own system not quite fully developed or described, to help the protest in France to go opposite from God. While Satan was busy running the atheism project in France, the Protestants in America got away from him, and he had to go back to the abyss where he had been since Jesus sent him there. The abyss was a staging area from which Satan could, in hidden ways, connect with certain people, influence systems of the world, develop loyalties to himself, and attend to developing his own super system.

Meanwhile, the Protestants set up the United States Constitution to separate the many systems. No one system would have control. Over time, Satan helped the Roman Church to create a loose enough system to gather back in all the Protestants, Orthodox, Muslims, and many other God-professing systems under one super system and control, with all the infrastructures and economics needed. That would be called Babylon, from Babel. She umbrellaed the patchwork animal, the image-making animal, and the dragon who continued increasing hidden contacts through seances and channeling.

In the meantime, since Jesus left, Satan had been creating and setting up his own super system for worship of himself. His demons ran the system with the help of some loyal henchmen on earth. This super system umbrellaed every god-renouncing system on earth, every corporation, organization, and government who chose the godless path.

When, in God’s will, it was time for the judgment of Babylon, and when Babylon was swollen with all her uneasy children, God allowed Satan’s super system to show up from the abyss to give her a ride. This system of Satan’s had seven heads, the empire powers he had used through the ages, and the woman settled her foundation on them, Babylon sitting on Ancient Babylon, the Roman Church sitting on the medieval Roman Church. The ride was not easy. Satan had never really liked the Roman Church and all the other churches who refused to worship him. Satan pulled together some ten of those kings who had slept with Babylon and hated her for it, and he helped them rip her super system to pieces and burn her infrastructures.

That left only Satan’s super system, a few of the systems still surviving since coming loose out of Babylon, and all those loose people on whom Babylon had been sitting as if on water. Satan’s super system brought them all into the fight against the Lamb. Of course, he lost and, while God took care of the people he had rescued, God let the patchwork animal and the image-making animal go to the fire, and God kept Satan, the dragon, in lock-up.

Then it was not merely the abyss for him this time—it was the lake of fire!

Lessons for the Present

It is important to me to consider what this view might mean for me and my students in our current living situations.

My research for this view has brought me to a larger sense of urgency to be knowing God and to a larger sense of the almost overwhelming wonders of Satan’s powers. If I am waiting for a Sunday law and looking to the Roman Church to mastermind the end-time evil, I may be surprised, on the one hand, when coercion against God takes shape quite a bit ahead of a Sunday law, and I may be troubled, on the other hand, when the Roman Church gets destroyed by a cunning and powerful force I never expected.

Furthermore, in waiting for the Roman Church to rise, I may totally dismiss the powers of atheism and coercion for godless ends at work today as having no import toward end times. Because of this unawareness, I may collude and be utterly taken by surprise when they rise up into a magnificently efficient system led by the devil himself.

Perhaps some justice can be found in Satan’s hatred of, attack on, and destruction of all fallen religious systems before he meets his end. The religious persecutors of God’s people are destroyed by the godless enemies of God’s people. Satan will have his moment of power as king of this world, and it will be a time of great trouble with God’s people protected (Dan 12:1). All intelligent beings everywhere will see what Satan’s rule produces and be inoculated from ever following his course of rebellion against God.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Though it seems like we meet enemies of God’s people at all turns, yet we are encouraged by the very name given this animal, knowing he is but a parody, a vanishing vapor beside our God and Jesus.

Now, for a quick review and warning, let us notice some identifying marks of the primary antagonists in both Revelation and Daniel. Their identifying marks appear to include these:

(1) speaking blasphemy, great words against God (Dan 7:8, 20, 25; 8:23; 11:36; Rev 13:5–6, 8),

(2) attempting to change God’s law (Dan 7:25; Rev 12:17),

(3) warring against God’s people (Dan 7:21, 25; 8:24; Rev 12:17),

(4) using force and killing (Dan 11:38; Rev 13:15; 17:6; 18:24),

(5) using deceit and flattery (Dan 11:23, 32, 34; Rev 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10),

(6) controlling wealth (Dan 8:25; 11:43; Rev 13:17; 18:3, 11–18), and

(7) maintaining power for 1260 years at one sitting (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:9, 11–12; 12:14; 13:5).

It seems to me that God surely wants those who understand to recognize the Devil’s work (Dan 11:33, 35; Matt 24:15; Rev 13:18). These are the things to avoid.

Now please hear the ode to Jesus that I find as the shining gem of Revelation 17. It is in the parody that I find the lovely Jesus.

Every time I hear of this animal who was and is not and will come, my heart leaps with joy to remember and worship the Almighty God, the one who was and is and is to come (Rev 4:8). In our God there is no “is not.” He is the one who always “is” and never “is not.” Believers believe that he “is” (Heb 11:6). Disciples believe he is with us always (Matt 28:20). He is! He is! Godlessness has no true “is.”

Also, every time I hear of this animal who was and is not and will come, my heart leaps with joy and sprints with courage because Jesus, and no other, is the one who lives and was dead and is alive forevermore (Rev 1:8). No god but Jesus died for his people. No leader but Jesus rose from the dead to bring his people comfort and guidance forever. Besides reference to the Lord God Almighty, the parody recalls Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. He “was” in his life on earth as a real human, he experienced the “is not” while he lay in the tomb, and he “is to come” in the clouds with great glory.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The parody points to the original, the true, the magnificent, one-of-a-kind God whom we serve. In this way, it is in the parody that I find the lovely Jesus in Revelation 17. I think the plague-angel guide who spoke that parody intended this magnificently full meaning.

Additionally, in Revelation 17 I find mention of Jesus, the Lamb, specifically with his throngs of saints and martyrs, and called, chosen, and faithful individuals (Rev 17:6, 14). It is Jesus’ blood that enables the overcoming of his people (Rev 12:11). It is Jesus’ and the Father’s commandments that provide the foundation for the only utopia that will ever exist (Rev 12:17; 14:12). If I let my imagination dwell on the true trajectory of history with God’s kingdom as its true end, I am energized and exultant in the grace of our Lord, and I have a mission to announce it everywhere.

Further Discussion Toward Other Views

So far in this paper, I have presented and discussed my view. Now I will turn to discussion that leans toward evaluation of other views. After some setting of the stage with Abbreviations and Review, I will discuss these topics: first, Temporal Location of the “Is” and “Is Not,” second, Composition of the “Seven” and the “Eight,” third, Other Ways of Composing the “Seven” and the “Eight,” fourth, The Roman Church in Revelation 13 and 17, fifth, Composition of the “Five Fallen,” and a short summary.

Abbreviations and Review

Because this section will be dense with names, some abbreviations will help facilitate communication. “Roman Empire” will stand distinguished from the “Roman Church,” which will mean all the Medieval Authoritarian Systems, including but not limited to Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam. The Roman Church will be connected with the patchwork animal in this paper.

“Protestantism,” having produced the United States, the flagship of separation of systems, will mean all sorts of Protestantism with all the Enlightenment’s Separated Systems. “Atheism” will mean the French Revolution and all the atheistic revolutions that followed in this and the past century, in Russia, Spain, China, Korea, Cuba, Chile, Cambodia, and Nicaragua, to name a few.[[40]](#footnote-40) Protestantism will be connected to the image-making animal in this paper, while Atheism will be connected with the two sightings of the animal from the abyss.

“Spiritualism” will mean a pervasive attitude of openness, and even reaching, toward contact with the dead. It is an ancient phenomenon and has come into ubiquitous yet secret and subtle use since the 1840s. I will let this term refer to occultism, seances, channeling of ancient masters or spirit guides, New Age Thought, suppositions of reincarnation, and any seeking of contact with spirits of the dead. Spiritualism will be connected with the dragon in this paper. After all, it was the dragon, that ancient serpent, who told the first lie about death, “You will not really die.”

Let us review briefly one key factor. In this paper, I propose that the present tense verbs in Revelation 17:10-11 are key to understanding the angel’s explanation, and that their events occur simultaneously. The “is” and the “is not” participate in two very different sequences. Since their obvious present tense stands opposed to past and future tenses in their respective sequences and in the same paragraph, it seems that any items clearly in the present tense are roughly simultaneous, or during a shared span of time. Therefore, if the “is” represents something in the time of John’s first readers in the first century, then the “is not” will also be in place in the first century. If the “is” exists in our time, then the “is not” will also exist in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I propose that the phrase “was, is not, and will come” is a persevering description, or real characterization, of the devil and refers to real time.

Three options present themselves as the temporal location in history of the present “is” and “is not.” One possible location lies in the first century for the first readers and hearers of John’s material. A second possible location lies in our time, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A third possible location lies in the future during the millennium. We will explore these.

Temporal Location of the “Is” and the “Is Not”: Three Options

If we insist that the “is” and the “is not” of Revelation 17:10-11 do occur simultaneously, then we ask whether this present was in the time of John’s first readers and hearers, in our time, or in some other time.

One view holds that, for believers in John’s day, Rome would come first to mind as the present empire.[[41]](#footnote-41) Rome might be the logical “is,” with creative ways to find five prophetic empires previous to Rome to fit the past-tense “fallen” (Rev 17:10). Though some tried to fit Nero Redivivus to the “is not” (Rev 17:11), many scholars find this present “is not” in the future, after John’s day, after the French Revolution, with the Roman Church awaiting reinvigoration as the returned Roman Church. Since this view does not hold the “is” and the “is not” in the same time period, the proposal of this paper will bypass this view.

I suggest that, if it is important to keep the “is” in the time seen as present by the first hearers, then it is important to keep the “is not” in the same time, present to the first readers. In this view then, the Roman Church cannot be the “was, is not, and will come.” In this paper, I propose that Satan fits the “is not” for the believers who first heard John’s writing. He fits the “was and is not” by his use of Rome to attack and kill Jesus besides bothering many of the common people in Jesus’ day, and then being driven away by the authority Jesus gave the believers. John’s first hearers would have rejoiced in that authority and been pleased that Satan was gone for a while. He “was and is not.”

In a second view, different from that shown in this paper, keeping both present-tense verbs in our time, centuries after the time of the first readers, Protestantism would be the “is” while the Roman Church would be the “is not.” I believe this view would be biblical because the riddle form containing the “is” and the “is not” could have been first heard as setting these verses apart from the first century context. However, this view creates the logical conundrum of both the woman and the beast representing the Roman Church, so that the Roman Church, destroys the Roman Church, and carries on somehow to be thrown into the fire. The view presented in this paper clears up that puzzle, seeing Satan’s super system destroy the Roman Church and survive to be thrown into the fire.

In a third view, different from that of this paper, putting both present-tense verbs in the future, the “is” could be the saints in heaven during the millennium, and the “is not” could be Satan imprisoned during the millennium then returning to stir up all people and demons to attack the Holy City (Rev 20:8-9). Both the “is” and the “is not” would be during the millennium. However, this view lacks an animal, or head-mountain-king, one out of seven, to represent the saints in heaven. It leaves the scholar to cast about and perhaps make up something to be the “is” during the “is not.” The view proposed in this paper uses exactly the seven animals given in the biblical line-up.

Either bringing the present tense to our time or sending it to the future requires some creative ways to make seven and eight as mentioned in the angel’s explanation.

Composition of the “Seven” and the “Eight”

Let us examine how the “Seven” and the “Eight” might be composed. If we allow Satan as the “was, is not, and will come,” then we can simply affirm that Satan has been the designer and energizer behind all the animals and kings. He comes after the seven as the eighth and is “of the seven” as their creator and manager. This is a simple solution, and, I believe, biblical and sufficient.

Another approach is to say the eighth is really the seventh, that they are the same. The problem here is that the text says there are eight, and I think interpretation must deal with it as the eighth. Here is my more complicated explanation.

In this paper, I propose that, since seven characters populate Daniel 7 and Revelation 12-13, no additions to this list are needed in order to make the seven kings of Revelation 17:9-10. Strong verbal parallels connect Daniel 7 with Revelation 13, and a triad cited in Revelation 16:8, interconnecting the dragon, allows Revelation 12 into this arena. I favor this intertextual arena as source for the seven kings required in Revelation 17:9-10. The first seven, then, are lion, bear, leopard, dreadful animal, dragon, patchwork animal, and image-making animal.

In verse 11, the eight, and then the seven also, apparently include the scarlet animal of Revelation 17:3, added to the previously identified seven. Please notice with me that the grammar is different for both the “seven” and “eighth” in verse 11, calling attention to an often overlooked distinction.

In verse 10, the adjectival numeral “seven” has a noun, three symbolically synonymous nouns. They are seven kings, mountains, and heads; for short, “kings,” five of whom are fallen. In verse 11, the ordinal adjectival numeral “eighth” has no noun. Likewise, the cardinal numeral “seven” has no noun but is instead treated as its own noun.

When we first delineated our list of seven “kings” we included the dragon to make one of the five who are fallen, yet now we remember that the dragon is never called an animal, or “beast,” and cannot be included in a list of animals. This then is the process: our original list of seven for kings included the dragon; we add the scarlet animal and have eight kings. For numbering the animals, however, we must exclude the dragon since he is never called an animal, and when we add the scarlet animal, we have seven animals.

English speakers want to supply the nearest proximal antecedent noun, “beast,” after “eighth” because the ordinal number requires a noun. Instead, we hear a hiatus because the author would not call all eight of the characters “beasts.” He would call them “kings,” but not “beasts.” That leaves eight kings (including the dragon) and seven animals (excluding the dragon) with the last in each series being the scarlet animal. With these fill-ins the riddle reads, “The scarlet animal is the eighth king. He is also one of the seven animals.”

The clue lies in revising our list of seven at this point to exclude the dragon from the “seven” but not from the “eighth,” because he is never called an animal back in Revelation 12. We have eight “kings, mountains, heads” that include the dragon, and seven animals, without the dragon, both sets ending with the scarlet animal.

In my proposal, complicated as it sounds, the dragon serves as a phantom, a now-you-see-him-now-you-don’t phenomenon, which I think fits his character quite well. He is the one who was, and is not, and yet is. His biography sees him in Jesus’ time quite nakedly the dragon, that old serpent, called the devil, having been cast out of heaven. In the eighteenth century he comes out, his system not fully developed but hereby launched on earth. In Revelation 17, he has his super system developed on earth and can be called an animal, an earthly system.

Other Ways of Composing the “Seven” and the “Eight”: Two More Options

One different way some might compose the seven without the dragon is to bring in the animal from Revelation 11 as the atheism boosted in the French Revolution and still lurking about in godless Marxism, Stalinism, Maoism, and Globalism, among other “isms.” In this view, this other animal is thought to be a separate animal from any of the others.

My observations are that the animal of Revelation 11 appears in a very different part of Revelation and is underdeveloped as a character. Revelation 11 lies in the first half of Revelation, before the big beginning again in Revelation 12. Its animal lacks fine characterization as the other animals have received in the text. We know hardly anything about how it looked, but only that it came from the abyss. In life on earth, it has an underdeveloped system and infrastructure, also, ever aiming, without God, to bring the utopia or pre-utopia to the globe, and never yet reaching the goal. On the other hand, this animal is indeed among the animals of Revelation and may have his place among the seven. I would place him as an opposite twin to Protestantism, a cameo appearance of Satan’s super system before full development.

A second way some might compose the seven without the dragon could be to give the Roman Church a second place in the line-up as the return of the Roman Church with all the power, infrastructures, and economies of the medieval Roman Church, now rejuvenated and on steroids for final world domination of churches.

For this paper, I prefer to stay with the line-up given in Daniel and Revelation which has the receiving of worship, the deadly wound, and the healing all in one animal. This one animal, the Roman Church, has its own name and place in Revelation 17. It seems to me that the revived Roman Church is Babylon, the fallen woman, all false religious systems gathered under one head and riding the scarlet animal.

My proposal for the composition of the “seven” and the “eight” can be visualized by looking at the chart, Appendix I: Revelation 17.

Composition of the “Five Fallen”: Four Options

To get to the “is” we need five entities which are fallen by the time of the “is.” We will observe four different ways to compose the “five fallen.”

Please observe composition number one. If the Roman Empire will be the “is” in the first century, then the fifth of the five needs to be Greece. Some add Egypt and Assyria to the line-up before Babylon, Persia, and Greece.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, I see no “was, is not, and will come” that has the “is not” at the same time as the Roman Empire’s “is.” Composition number one does not represent the proposal of this paper for the composition of the “five fallen,” though I respect the scholars who do the work on this ground. Perhaps the prophet was carried ahead in time between the “is” and the “is not,” or perhaps the “is not” serves merely as a title with no temporal meaning.

Please observe composition number two. If the Roman Church will be the “is” in the first century, as proposed in this paper, then the first is ancient Babylon, and the fifth of the five can be Satan through Rome as in the time of Christ.

**Finding the Five Fallen (Related to the Seven)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Composition Number One | Composition Number Two | Composition Number Three | Composition Number Four |
| 1 | Egypt | Babylon | Babylon | Babylon |
| 2 | Assyria | Persia | Persia | Persia |
| 3 | (1) Babylon | Greece | Greece | Greece |
| 4 | (2) Persia | Roman Empire | Roman Empire | Rome, Empire and Church |
| 5Was, Is Not,  Will Come | (3) Greece | Satan through Roman Empire | Roman Church | Protestantism/ Atheism |
| 6 IS | (4) Roman Empire | Roman Church | Protestantism/ Atheism | Saints in Heaven 1000 Years |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (5) Roman Church then  (6) Protestantism | (7)  Protestantism/ Atheism |  |  |
| 7 Will Come | Roman Church as Both Babylon and Scarlet, the Primary End-Time Evil | (8) Satan’s System Supports, then Destroys, Roman Church as Babylon | Roman Church as Both Babylon and Scarlet, the Primary End-Time Evil | Atheism, as Satan’s System, Fights After 1000 Years |

Please observe composition number three. If Protestantism and its very different sister, Atheism, will be the “is” in our time, then the Roman Church can be the fifth of the five, following the Roman Empire, and falling by capture of the Roman Pope in 1798. The Roman Church thus becomes the present, the “is not” since 1798, to be revived in the future. This composition does not differentiate well between this revived Roman Church, as the “was, is not, and will come” on the one hand, and its contemporary Roman Church, as Babylon, on the other hand.

Composition number three is a picture of my previous proposal.[[43]](#footnote-43) I believed that the prophet may have been carried into a new time dimension in which he saw past, present, and future from the perspective of the time to which he had been carried. This perspective would allow for composition number four as well. However, composition number three, like composition number two, does not differentiate well between the woman and the scarlet animal, assigning both to the Roman Church.

Please observe composition number four. If the saints in heaven will be the “is” in future time, then Protestantism and its very different sister, Atheism, can be the fifth of the five, if we also consider Rome, in empire and church, as one entity. This composition lacks an animal among the seven to represent the saints in heaven while Satan’s super system gets interrupted by the millennium and then resumed after the millennium. Perhaps it is acceptable to include an animal outside the seven and the eight, the Lamb.

Composition number one splits the “is” from the “is not.” Composition number two successfully places the “is” and the “is not” in John’s time. Composition number three places them in our time. Composition number four places them during the millennium to come. The proposal presented in this paper for the composition of the “five fallen,” which corresponds to composition number two, can be further visualized by looking at the chart, called, Appendix I: Revelation.

The Roman Church in Revelation 13 and 17

Here the question pops up: Where in the text does the patchwork animal of Revelation 13, the Roman Church, turn into Babylon, the woman of Revelation 17? The answer lies in following the name “Babylon.” In Revelation 13, the Roman Church is associated with the patchwork animal, then called simply “the animal.” In Revelation 14, another entity suddenly appears with no introduction, called Babylon, the name recalling all the memory associations with Babel and the ancient Babylonian empire, a fallen system of worship (Rev 14:8). In Revelation 16, the great battle is called together by demons from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, recalling the three entities introduced in Revelation 12 and 13, Satan (now manifest as Spiritualism), the Roman Church, and Protestantism (Rev 16:13-14). Then also in Revelation 16, Babylon was divided into three parts as she came under God’s judgment (Rev 16:19). It is possible to leap from one text to the other to see Babylon coming into judgment either falling apart or by going on, as three entities: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Babylon then is made of Spiritualism, the Roman Church, and Protestantism. The Roman Church is therefore one-third of Babylon and dominates the other worship systems.

A second question might be this: Why does Babylon present as a woman rather than continue consistently presenting as the patchwork animal? Here are some possible answers based on logic and my point of view. One, this entity needs to encompass much more than one animal,—the dragon, the patchwork animal, and the image-making animal, otherwise called the false prophet. Two, the representation of this entity needs to be able to show clear rivalry with the bride, a woman. Three, this entity has a unique relationship with the scarlet animal, as well as with the kings of the earth, which would be difficult to show if imagined as an animal rather than a woman. Four, this entity is religion and, in Revelation, a church is represented by a woman.

A third question arises about the Roman Church and the scarlet animal representing the same thing. The similar descriptions given of the people who worship or wonder at the patchwork animal and at the scarlet animal (Rev 13:8; 17:8) cause some to think that these two animals both represent the Roman Church. However, the strong allusions mentioned earlier of one to the other of these two animals do not necessarily mean they are the same animal, but only that they have similar character and mission. One set of people, those not listed in the book of life, will at some time transfer their worship from the Roman Church to Satan’s super system, perhaps at the time of the destruction of the Roman Church effected by Satan’s super system.

We have still more work to do with this evil trinity, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, which we have linked to the three entities of Revelation 12-13. The battle is called together by evil spirits from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet in Revelation 16:13-14, and the great Babylon is divided into three parts, presumably the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These references appear before Revelation 17, and the evil trinity appears again when being thrown into the fire Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, after Revelation 17.

It seems possible that Revelation 17 stands as the epitome of Satan’s success. He has his two comrades, the beast and the false prophet, both first subsumed in Babylon, and then freed of that great system and still operative, until defeated in the battle with the Lamb. It seems that the time of the scarlet animal is a short interlude showing the full display of Satan’s plan and kingdom. Soon enough the display reverts back to the evil trinity, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet as they are thrown into the fire.

By this time in Revelation, Satan has his super system, the scarlet animal, finally and finely developed to gain the worship of the whole world for himself. He deceitfully begins to support the woman Babylon, the Roman Church’s systematized confederacy of false religious systems. The text does not say that the scarlet animal carries Babylon anywhere. Later his henchmen kill her.

Summary of Further Discussion Toward Other Views

In this further discussion of Revelation 17, the verb tenses took a perspicacious place. To keep the present tenses “is” and “is not” in the same century, the “is” cannot be the Roman Empire in John’s day while the “is not” is the Roman Church in our day. We examined other ways to interpret the angel’s explanation that coordinate the present tense verbs. Some of these ways were applicable by the first readers in John’s time and some are carried over to our time or beyond.

It is my hope that this further discussion has clarified at least some of the issues for some of my readers.

Excursus: Comparing Revelation 17 with Daniel 11

Because both Revelation 17 and Daniel 11 purport to show some of the last scenes and last battles at the end of time, it is tempting for scholars to want to mine their comparisons for new insights. After laying out a few abbreviations and distinctions, including those of Egypt, Islam, and Atheism, we will examine the Comparison Chart and the Penultimate Scene in Daniel 11 and Revelation 17.

Abbreviations and Distinctions

To facilitate communication regarding entities in Daniel 11, I here institute the abbreviations, King North and King South for the King of the North and the King of the South, respectively. In the chart, the abbreviations will be KN and KS. Because most Adventists easily equate Daniel 11’s King North with Revelation 17’s Babylon, I will use King North/Babylon for that entity. Therefore, the penultimate line-up of characters are these: the scarlet animal, King North/Babylon, and King South.

Here we will distinguish between the scarlet animal and King South, since their presence each in a scene with King North/Babylon does not automatically identify them as the same entity. Let us also remember that these are systems, not individuals and not even loose groups of individuals. The many waters represent many individuals, as sheep without a shepherd. Here is a chart by which to study the distinctions between King South and the scarlet animal.

**Distinguishing the King of the South (King South) from the Scarlet Animal**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | King South | Scarlet Animal |
| Time of Rise | After crucifixion of Christ, during middle ages | After the enlightenment, in the French Revolution |
| Attitude Toward King North/Babylon | Aggressive | Supportive, at least apparently, at first |
| Target of Aggression | King North/Babylon | King North/Babylon, then Lamb |
| By Whom Dispatched | King North/Babylon | Lamb |
| How Dispatched | Whirlwind of War | Lake of Fire |
| When Dispatched | Before King North/Babylon is Eaten and Burned | Before the Battle with the Lamb |

This chart shows very little congruity between King South and the scarlet animal, in different times of rise, different attitudes, different enemies, different times and means of demise. All this incongruity would cause us to pause in identifying them as the same system.

Egypt, Islam, and Atheism

The mention of Egypt in connection with King North/Babylon’s response to King South’s aggression and in regard to the underdeveloped scarlet animal of Revelation 11 will be studied here. The question is, Does Egypt represent atheism or does Egypt represent Islam?

Egypt, in Daniel 11 was conquered along with Libya and Ethiopia in the war that King North instigated in response to King South’s aggression. Also mentioned are Edom, Moab, and Ammon, but some of them survived the war. We would expect to find all these within the land area of King South. Being mentioned twice and first, Egypt may be seen as the flagship of these nations among King South’s possessions.

Egypt, in Revelation 11, appears with that great city (not yet fully developed and named Babylon), Sodom, and Jerusalem, specifically, where Jusus was crucified. In addition to conjuring what characteristics of each of these other cities might illustrate either the animal or the city, let us notice one obvious connection. In a setting of the people of earth having killed their messengers, Sodom would have been remembered as a city who tried to kill its messengers. Egypt would have been remembered for trying to kill any possible deliverer of Israel. Jerusalem was remembered for crucifying our Lord. It seems these are sufficient reasons for the inclusion of Egypt in Revelation 11 without citing Pharoah’s infamous riposte: “Who is Jehovah? I know not Jehovah,” as a seed of atheism. I see the atheism, instead, in the scarlet animal.

Looking at the development of religion on earth I see the following charted progression after the flood.

**Progression of Religion: Egypt, Islam, Atheism, and Others**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Old Idolatry, Paganism, and Pantheism | In the time of Abraham, only this and monotheism was conceivable. This includes worship of ancestors, animals, sun, moon, planets, fertility, sorcery, and a mythical pantheon of gods that act like humans with supernatural powers. There was no atheism as we know it because there were always the gods. |
| Monotheism | Abraham worshiped the Most High God, one God, over all. All the time before Christ was full of either old idolatry and paganism or worship of the Most High God. |
| Christianity | Jesus instituted a religion worshiping Jesus, son of, and one with, the Most High God. |
| Islam | Mohammad began a religion worshiping Allah, one God, over all, but with a new prophet and a warring spirit. This was in the seventh century. |
| Protestantism | With the enlightenment came the vision to separate religious groups from the tyranny of a state religion. This was in the eighteenth century and accompanied by the freedom experiment that was the United States of America. |
| Atheism | With the enlightenment came the vision of a state without religion, a system built upon godlessness. This was in the eighteenth century and accompanied by the new experiment that was the French Revolution. |
| New Satanism and Pantheism | The old idolatries, paganism, and pantheism are renewed, reworked, or continued through to now, as Wiccanism, psychic consultations, panentheism, or experiments by other names. |

The point of this little exercise in religious history is to show that Egypt was never an atheistic system. Gods abounded in Egypt. Atheism was inconceivable until the enlightenment opened the way for separate thinking. Two experiments arose almost simultaneously, on the one hand, freedom based on rights derived from God, and on the other hand, a striving for human utopia that dismisses God and craves freedom from God.

I believe we must look to the eighteenth century for the seeds of atheism. Atheism is well represented by the underdeveloped animal that appears from the abyss in Revelation 11:7-8. Therefore, according to the chart of Daniel 11, we must look ten centuries earlier to find the origins of the King South. The Ptolemies were long gone though they were the first King South systems. In the seventh century, Islam swept the south of the Mediterranean and keeps Egypt in our day. Islam earns my confirmation as King South.

Examining a Chart of Daniel 11 for Comparison with Revelation 17

I believe it will be instructive for the identification of the woman and the scarlet animal to observe Daniel 7, 8, and 11 next to Revelation 17. Please find in the appendices first the chart for Revelation 17 and then a comparable chart for Daniel 11. I believe we will find multiplied evidence that Daniel and Revelation show the same events and systems.

Because, earlier in this paper, I opened the topic of Islam, influenced by Stefanovic’s focus on the atrocities of several authoritarian systems in medieval times,[[44]](#footnote-44) the question seems inescapable regarding the place of Islam at the time of the scarlet animal and the woman Babylon. We have shown Babylon as all religious systems in a super system led by the Roman Church. We have shown the scarlet animal as incorporating all atheistic systems under the leadership of Satan. We do not yet see the other two monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam. To get started on them, I made a chart for Daniel 11 (see Appendix II: Daniel 11).

Let us examine the columns I have made. The first column shows the animals of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, integrating the numbering system from my previous chart. The second column shows Daniel 8 and the verbal expansions on the word “great” that identify the same systems as shown in the first column. Please notice that I find organizing significance in the repetition sounds for the word we translate “great.”

To interrupt our focus on the chart with a quick adventure, please try to imagine being in a group of ancient listeners while Daniel is read aloud. You have heard together Daniel 2, where steps in empire appearances are marked off by specific metals or elements. You have heard Daniel 7, where similar steps in empire appearances are marked off by various wild animals. In Daniel 8 you hear about two animals, and another aural marking system catches your ear. Those two animals are described by varying expansions on the sounds of the word we translate “great.”

You have no printed headings in aural communications. The ear has to sort by the sounds. For the ancients, one of the most popular ways to sort was by repeated sounds, that is, by repeated words and phrases. You listen on through Daniel 8 and get it sorted by the use of the repeated and escalated “great.”

Then in Daniel 11, your ear picks up the sounds of “do according to his will” because you were primed for that in Daniel 8:4. You hear each instance of “do according to his will” as a clue to the movement through the chapter. You have no need of guessing where one section ends and another starts because the outline is embedded in the sounds.[[45]](#footnote-45)

The third column turns to Daniel 11 and demonstrates the significance I find in the repetition of the phrase “do according to his will.” I identify the divisions in Daniel 11 according to that repeated phrase. The fourth column cites a few key phrases from Daniel 11 that influence my notes in the fifth column.

We now focus on King North and King South as they appear in this chart. They show up in the third row and are usually identified there as the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. I ask us to notice that their location is according to the map, the direction north or south being in relation to Israel.

In the fifth row, there is no “do according to his will” phrase; however, within the following eight to ten verses there appear two instances of simply “do” without an object. In English we have trouble making sense of a transitive verb without an object. The King James Version inserts the word “exploits” as object of “do,” to ease our discomfort without the object. This seems strange enough to call forth thought, perhaps to showcase the King North of Medieval times, who cannot fully do what he wants because there are people who know God who are already doing.

In the fifth row, then, one can see the rise and expansion of Islam as one of the authoritarian systems that thrive during medieval times. I identify Islam here because I have looked at the map and see Islam generally below the 40th parallel north, and Christianity generally above that parallel. The directions, north and south, are still generally in relation to Israel’s position.

The two kings of north and south appear again in the seventh row, where the scarlet animal as Satan’s super system and Babylon as the Roman Church system are consolidating for their showing in Revelation 17. It seems to me that here Islam, as King South, aggresses against the Roman Church system as King North. The Roman Church system succeeds well against Islam but is interrupted by “tidings,” of Jesus’ coming from the east and of God’s throne triumphant in the “sides of the north.” Or perhaps the tidings come from the north where Satan’s super system is organizing to fulfill his desire to sit “in the sides of the north” (Isa 14:13).

The Penultimate Scene

I have taught and told people that, in the ultimate scene of earth, there are only two sides, God and Satan, the Lamb of Revelation 19 and the scarlet animal of Revelation 17.

However, in both Daniel and Revelation, a penultimate scene shows two sides arrayed against God. In Daniel, King North and King South interact just before Michael stands for his people in Daniel 12. In Revelation, Babylon and the scarlet animal appear just before the battle of the scarlet animal and the Lamb in Revelation 19.

In both situations, however, one of the two who share the scene is scattered or destroyed and never seen again. In Revelation 17-18, Babylon is destroyed, and the scarlet animal survives to fight the Lamb. In Daniel 11:40-45, King South disappears, and King North/Babylon survives to be troubled by news from the east and the north and later to come to his end with no one to help.

Adventists seem pretty sure that King North and Babylon are the same end-time entity.[[46]](#footnote-46) It is the identity of the other two that puzzles us: the scarlet animal and King South. The simple fact of having two leftover entities without knowing how to read them should not lead us to equate the two or think them the same. They may support each other, though this is not shown in the text.

Because the outcomes for King North/Babylon are vastly different between the two penultimate scenes, I will understand that one of these scenes must be previous to the other, that is, antepenultimate. Because King North/Babylon seems to survive in Daniel 11 but is destroyed in Revelation 17, I will conclude that Daniel 11 is the antepenultimate scene, prior to the completion of alliances seen in Revelation 17.

We will summarize the scenes. In the antepenultimate scene (King South against King North/Babylon), King South loses. In the penultimate scene (scarlet animal against Babylon/King North), Babylon loses. In the ultimate scene (scarlet animal against the Lamb), the scarlet animal loses. We summarize the entities. King North dispatches King South. The scarlet animal dispatches Babylon/King North. The Lamb dispatches the scarlet animal.

**Three Scenes in the Last Row**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dan 7; Rev 13 | Dan 8 | Dan 11 | Dan 11 | Notes |
| Antepenultimate Scene  8. Scarlet Animal  Rev 17:10-11 |  |  | Dan 11:40-45  “KS pushes at KN” Dan 11:40  “Tidings out of the East and North”  Dan 11:44 | Islam pushes against the Roman Church System.  Islam scattered. |
| Penultimate Scene  Hates the whore  Rev 17:16-17 | “Stand up against the Prince of Princes, but broken without hand” Dan 8:25 | “Come to his end and none will help him”  Dan 11:45 |  | Roman Church System destroyed by Satan’s System. |
| Ultimate Scene  Lamb overcomes  Rev 17:14  Kingdom given to Saints  Dan 7:27 |  |  | Dan 12:1  Michael stands up.  Great trouble.  Saints delivered. | Jesus’ Coming. Satan’s System fights the Lomb and is destroyed.  God’s throne triumphant. |

Two more questions with which we wrestle are these: One, where will Islam be in Revelation 17, when there are only two players on the field of evil? Two, if Islam is King South what happens to Islam? I see three options that will answer both our questions: Either (1) Islam joins Babylon, led by the Roman Church system, before the Roman Church system gathers full steam in Revelation 17, or (2) Islam joins Satan’s super system, also before Revelation 17, or (3) Islam as a system disintegrates and its people scatter into the other system(s) with a number of them joining God’s people on the field of good. Personally, I lean toward option three, and I believe this could happen at any time while the scarlet animal and the woman are arranging and building their systems.

This would also correspond with the understanding of Israel, the system, as not holding a major role at the end. It may have joined one of the super systems, or it may have been conquered and its people scattered. It seems likely from Daniel 11:45 that the land which Israel anciently and currently occupies will be coveted by several entities as time goes on, and right up to the end.

The choice is stark. Islam and Israel, both of Abrahamic descent, may go under a God-claiming autocratic system, Babylon, or may go under a god-renouncing autocratic system, the scarlet animal, or may go underground with God’s true people. In Revelation 17, it seems there are only these three options.

To summarize the comparison of Revelation 17 with Daniel 11, we can see that a study of Daniel 11’s King South does not necessarily preclude or modify our identification of the scarlet animal and the woman in Revelation 17.

Conclusions

We have adventured through Revelation 17 with our guide to see the woman, the beast, the seven heads, the ten kings, and the woman again, using speech, imagery, and plot analyses. In speech analysis, we studied verb tenses and the use of sound repetitions in oral and aural communication. In imagery analysis, we pondered systems and how the systems pictured by the animals and the women work like their imagery. In plot analysis, we listened to the stories of Revelation 17, which showed us their movement through the chapter, hinting that much more plot analysis awaits consideration in my sequel to this paper.

We have identified the woman, Babylon, as all false worship systems, from ancient Babel and Babylon through the Roman Church and other medieval authoritarian systems to the moment when the state and civil powers available to Satan’s end-time super system destroy the woman. We have identified the beast as the comprehensive human and demon system Satan has set up for his own worship at the end of time, with some of the then-present state and civil powers deciding to unite to do his will.

We will summarize the relation of this view to Some Adventist Pillars, identify some possible Further Study projects, and tell the story one more time, finally.

Relation to Adventist “Pillars”

The view that I have proposed in this paper leaves intact the cherished Adventist “pillar” beliefs. I believe this view does not contradict any of Ellen White’s writings. I honor and agree with what Ellen White wrote: “The mark of the beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be.”[[47]](#footnote-47) I also honor and agree with this quotation from Ellen White, which was collected and reprinted from the *Review and Herald,* March 2, 1886: “Although new and important truths appropriate for succeeding generations have been opened to the understanding, the present revealings do not contradict those of the past. Every new truth understood only makes more significant the old.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

I believe my expanding the reach of Ellen White’s “Roman Church” or “Papacy” to “Medieval Authoritarian Systems” and of Ellen White’s “Protestantism” to “Enlightenment Separated Systems” provides no contradiction to Ellen White’s legacy but only globalizes the names for our day. My expanding names in no way discard her names but use them as flagships or nameplates for the global ideas.

This proposal’s most consequential difference from usual Adventist presentations lies in severing the tie in our minds that connects the “was and is not” with the wounding to death and healing. This severance perhaps reduces the spiritual significance of the Roman Church to give the super-system position related to “was and is not” to Satan, beginning with atheism, rather than to the Roman Church. It gives Satan the obvious role of final antagonist against God rather than the Pope or papal system merely instigated by Satan. This adjustment in significance of characters seems fitting to an ending of the cosmic war.

The proposal shown in this paper grows out of, builds upon, and strengthens the long-time Adventist understandings.

Further Study

We left unsorted some additional role confusions like the woman sitting on several things at once—the waters, the beast, heads of the beast, and mountains—or like the woman called Babylon sitting on the heads, one of which is Babylon, or the woman who is the Roman Church sitting on the heads, one of which is the Roman Church. Furthermore, it seems this Babylon could be another candidate for consideration as having the characteristic, “was, is not, and yet is.” Babylon was at Babel and Ancient Babylon as well as in the early 1800s (Rev 14:8) and will be returning in the end (Rev 17-18). Indeed, an oracle to Babylon became the setting for God’s illuminating for humans the origin of evil and Satan (Isa 13:1; 14:12-15).

The sorting of these roles leaves work for other papers. If any of these overlapping roles allows one part of the enemy to attack another part of the same enemy, this does not seem illogical to me. This is what happened with three armies against Israel when Jehoshaphat was king (2 Chron 20:22-23), and this is what happened with two factions in the council when Paul testified there (Acts 23:6-7).

A piece interesting for another paper would be the three parts of Babylon as divided (Rev 16:19). It would be good to learn and share the relationship of these three parts to the unclean spirits that come from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet looking like frogs and sent to call people to the battle of Armageddon. Perhaps a check into how the previous ideas might relate to the three entities thrown at last into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10) would also yield deeper understanding.

We did not pursue very far the separation of church and state. It would be possible to settle some of the role confusions by making the woman religious power and the beast state power. However, the big idea of separating church and state has been on earth only a short time (Rev 17:10). I believe most systems in the line-up, including the eighth, are mixed church and empire. This topic might provide interesting exploration.

We left for further study the great 666 puzzle and a deeper dive into the relationship between the scarlet beast and the dragon.

A study of allusions from Revelation 17, with the view proposed in this paper, to Old and New Testament ideas would yield a book length manuscript, I think, and surely be enlightening.

Further, continuing research into the relationships between Daniel and Revelation never fails to expand and feed my spiritual need. A sequel to this paper is available in which I zoom out and give more attention to the plot and movement in the full story of this animal. I use solid verbal parallels, scene similarities, and double chiasm to show that Daniel and Revelation tell the same story. I use plot and closure principles to identify a cosmic conflict plot outline shared and contributed to by Daniel and Revelation. Then I match this cosmic conflict plot outline to phrases with temporal indicators drawn from the writings of Ellen White. I show that the actions of the beast and of God are well foretold from now until the time that God rules supreme with love. Hope for a troubled future comes from knowing that future and the Christ who rules it. Knowing these and their peace and joy comes to me through reading Revelation, again and again.

The Final Story

This story is the final result here of my plot analysis for this proposal. I tell it to show the movements through Revelation 17 of characters and issues, to help us see big pictures and related contexts.

There once will be a trinity of powers, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, that is, Spiritualism, the Roman Church, and United States Protestantism. The Roman Church has in her system all the principles of ancient religious empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The United States Protestantism created a fabulous system of separation of powers for freedom of religion but will give that up. The spirits from this trinity will draw and bind people together in preparation for the great war. While the Roman Church and Protestantism had their extensive systems already, that is, systems of hierarchy, economy, truth, and justice, they unite themselves together under a super system called Babylon led by the Roman Church. Their common identity is God-professing and God-usurping, so as to believe they can together fix this world’s ills.

Also, there once will be a God-dismissing, God-renouncing super system housing all systems of earth who chose this banner and mission instead of Babylon. This drive to separate and dismiss God from empire is as new on earth’s scene as the Protestant concept of separation of powers for freedom of religion. This new super system we will call Satan’s super system. Global governments, corporations, and organizations will unite to fix this world’s ills without the supposedly out-dated and out-moded belief in the existence of God. At the head of this super system will be a cadre of henchmen who will one day welcome Satan himself to lead them into the final revolution and then their utopia.

These two super systems will become the only “viable” choices for anyone on earth who wants to thrive or even survive. There will be some jockeying and coercion to unite all systems into these two. There will be a third option, a seemingly small group of individuals and small systems who will worship God in humility and become a target of desperation for both the super systems, but God will protect them.

Then from a protected place, God’s people will see their enemies turn on one another. Satan’s super system has never liked the proclamation of God and will destroy the other super system, Babylon. Babylon will break apart with Spiritualism, the Roman Church, and Protestantism being the primary survivors. All survivors take their only available option and unite with Satan’s super system to fight God and the Son of God. This will be the Battle of Armageddon.

Very soon in the war, Satan’s super system will break apart, leaving only the Roman Church and Protestantism to be thrown as systems into the lake of fire. All anti-God systems, broken on earth, leave multitudes of individuals who have followed the leaders. These will give themselves up to die under the sword of the Word of God. This leaves only the dragon, Satan, on earth where God will let him stew for a thousand years while God’s people will be getting used to trusting and thriving in God’s system, called the Holy City and New Jerusalem.

Finally, God’s system will return to earth, raise all God-deniers and all God-usurpers from all generations, watch Satan whip into shape a huge super system and come for attack on the Holy City. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire where the Roman Church and Protestantism already are. The fire will burn up all God-deniers and God-usurpers from all ages,—and Satan and his angels.

The Holy City, God’s super system, is the utopia and euphoria this world craves, the proper goal of the trajectory of all history, with all systems and all people singing, God is love.

Closing

Since I have changed my thinking over the last few years, and believe I might change it again, I am willing to listen to and participate in further studies in Revelation 17. I think it would be good to find many better ways to say the results of such further research.

Does the woman kiss the beast? Not so as to do her—or him—any good!

**Appendix I: Revelation 17**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Animal | System Name | Seven Heads, Mtns, Kings | Eighth \_\_\_\_\_\_  Scarlet Animal | Disposition |
| 1. Lion | Babylon | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged  Dan 7:12.  Became part of Patchwork Animal.  Became whore of Dragon, Patchwork Animal, and Image Animal.  Destroyed by ten horns. |
| 2. Bear | Persia | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged.  Became part of Patchwork Animal. |
| 3. Leopard | Greece | Fallen |  | Demoted, life prolonged.  Became part of Patchwork Animal |
| 4. Dreadful | Roman Empire | Fallen |  | Slain, burned  Dan 7:11.  Subsumed in Dragon and burned at same time. |
| 5. Dragon | Satan through Rome | Fallen | Related to Dreadful Animal Dragon “Was” | Related to Dreadful Animal.  To Lake of Fire  Rev 20:10. |
| 6. Patchwork | Roman Church,  Medieval Authoritarian Systems | “Is” | Patchwork  Dragon “Is not” | Animal to the Lake of Fire  Rev 19:20. |
| 7. Image | Protestantism,  Enlightenment Separated Systems | “Other yet to come” | Image  Dragon “Is not” | False Prophet to Lake of Fire  Rev 19:20 |
| 8. Scarlet | Satan’s System |  | “Will Come up,”  “Yet is,” “Goes  to Perdition” | Fights the Lamb,  Animal to the Lake of Fire |

**Appendix II: Daniel 11**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Animals  Dan 7; Rev 13 | “Great”  Dan 8 | “Do”  Dan 11 | Key Phrases  Dan 11 | Notes |
| 1. Lion  Dan 7:4  Rev 13:2 | Not Listed Here | Not Listed Here | Not Listed Here | **Babylon** had already passed from history when Daniel had this dream. |
| 2. Bear  Dan 7:5  Rev 13:2 | Ram  Dan 8:2, 4, 20  “Great” Dan 8:4 | “Do according to his will” Dan 8:4 | Dan 11:1-2  Four more kings, stirring against Greece. | **Persia.** |
| 3. Leopard  Dan 7:6  Rev 13:2 | Goat  Dan 8:5-8, 21  “Very Great”  Dan 8:8 | “Do according to his will”  Dan 11:3 | Dan 11:3-15  “King North,”  “King South,’  (KN, KS) | **Greece.**  Seleucids and Ptolemies.  Map N and S. |
| 4. Dreadful  Dan 7:7  5. Dragon  Rev 12:3-13:2 | Little Horn  Dan 8:9, 22-23  “Exceeding Great”  Dan 8:9 | “Do according to his will”  Dan 11:16 | Dan 11:16-24  “Prince of the Covenant”  Dan 11:22 | **Roman Empire.**  Satan through Rome  Kills Christ. |
| Little Horn  “Against the Most High”  Dan 7:8, 25  6. Patchwork Animal  Rev 13:3-8 | Little Horn  Dan 8:10, 24  “Great even to the Host of Heaven”  Dan 8:10 | “Do”  Dan 11:28  People who know God will “do”  Dan 11:32 | Dan 11:25-35  “Take away the daily, place the abomination of desolation”  Dan 11:31  KS fights  Dan 11:25 | **Roman Church.**  Medieval Authoritarian Systems.  Set up against the sanctuary.  Islam grows. |
| Judgment Scene  Dan 7:26  7. Image Animal  Rev 13:11-18 | Little Horn  Dan 8:11-14, 25  “Magnify even against the Prince of the Host”  Dan 8:11 | “Do according to his will”  Dan 11:36 | Dan 11:36-39  “Strange new God”  Dan 11:37-39  “2300 days then Sanctuary will be cleansed”  Dan 8:14 | **Protestantism.**  Enlightenment Separated Systems.  Atheism.  Roman Church Revitalized.  Sanctuary Vindicated |
| Kingdom given to Saints  Dan 7:27  8. Scarlet Animal  Rev 17:10-11, 14, 16-17 | “Stand up against the Prince of Princes, but  broken without hand”  Dan 8:25 | “Come to his end and none will help him”  Dan 11:45 | Dan 11:40-45  “KS pushes at KN” Dan 11:40  “Tidings out of the East and North”  Dan 11:44 | **Satan’s System.** Roman Church System.  Islam pushing.  Jesus’ Coming and God’s throne triumphant. |

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1. Alomia, Pfandl, and Rodriguez, “Daniel,” 1058. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Short definitions as I use the words: The *Preterist* viewpoint keeps the interpretation between the times of Daniel and John, attributing the source of “end-time” scenes to tales common to the culture at the times of writing. The *Futurist* viewpoint focuses interpretation on a distant future, though some reference is assumed to Israel and Jews or the church. The *Historicist* viewpoint spreads its interpretation from the time of each prophet, and even back before the prophet, to the consummation at the end of historical time. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Aune, *Revelation 6-16,* 733, 747, 829; *Revelation 17-22,* 917, 951. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Boring, *Revelation,* 179-180; Boring, “Revelation,” 2230, 2234. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 854. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Beale, *Book of Revelation,* 865. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Beale, *Book of Revelation,* 869. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Doukhan, *Secrets,* 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Doukhan, *Secrets,* 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Doukhan, Secrets, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Paulien, *Gospel,* 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Tonstad, *Revelation,* 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Tonstad, *Revelation,* 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Tonstad, *Revelation,* 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Tonstad, *Revelation,* 179-180. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Stefanovic, “Revelation,” 1989-990. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Stefanovic, “Revelation,” 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ,* 419-420. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Goldstein, *1844,* 12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Boring, *Revelation,* vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This would be similar to Doukhan’s perspective in *Secrets,* 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Zalabak, *Happiest Book,* 70-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Paulien, *Gospel*, 296; Doukhan, *Secrets,* 163; Stefanovic, “Revelation,” 521. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Stefanovic, *Revelation,* 420-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Schloss, “Religious Orders,” https://www.patheos.com/blogs/summacatholic/2023/10/religious-orders-within-catholicism/. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Lee and Scott, *Sound Mapping,* 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Lee and Scott, *Sound Mapping,* 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Lee and Scott, *Sound Mapping*, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Lee and Scott, *Sound Mapping,* 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Paulien, *Decoding*, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Paulien, *Decoding,* 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Paulien, “Revelation 17,” 6, 13-14; “Revelation 12,” 34; Tonstad *Revelation,* 241, 243; Stefanovic. *Revelation of Jesus Christ,* 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Paulien, @ArmageddonHeadquarters, *Facebook,* November 23, 2024, comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. White, *Great Controversy,* 439. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. White, “Ellen G. White Comments—Revelation,” 983. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. White, “Ellen G. White Comments—Revelation,” 983. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets,* 41-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Jon Paulien finds many evidences of a parody between the patchwork animal and Jesus in Revelation 13 (@Armageddon Headquarters, *Facebook*, posts on December 13, 2024, and following. Here in Revelation 17, we find evidence of a parody between the scarlet animal and Jesus. This means that, even in the darkest lines of prophecy, Jesus is there. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Posobiec and Lisec, *Unhumans,* 61-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Paulien, *Gospel,* 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Paulien, *Gospel*, 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Zalabak, *Happiest Book,* 70-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ,* 420-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Lee and Scott, *Sound Mapping,* 81, 135, 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Alomia, Pfandl, and Rodriguez, “Daniel,” 1058. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. White, *Testimonies,* 6:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. White, *Know Him,* 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)