

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT REVELATION 17

Revelation 17 presents a vivid picture of the false religious system that will dominate during the tribulation period. It also shows her utter collapse toward the end of the tribulation. While Jesus has his redeemed bride Satan has his seductive harlot.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT HARLOT. 17:1-15.

A. The Mystery Revealed. 17:1-6.

1. Her seduction. 17:1-2.
2. Her attraction. 17:3-4.
3. Her identity. 17:5.
 - a. Mystery – Something that cannot be known apart from revelation and is known only to the initiated.
 - b. Babylon – The mother of all false religious systems. It has its origin in Genesis 11 with the tower of Babel. Ancient tradition tells us that a cult religion centering around the wife of Nimrod developed. She was known as the mother of heaven and, according to the legend, her child was supernaturally conceived and after being killed by a wild boar was raised from the dead. That false religion spread with various names being given to the woman and the child. Note Jer. 7:18; 44:17. The final form of this false religious system will be seen in the tribulation.

B. The Mystery Explained. 17:7-15.

1. The Beast – 17:8.
 - * The antichrist of Rev. 13. *
2. The Seven Heads – 17:9-11.
 - a. According to many Bible scholars represents the city of Rome. 17:18.
 - * Further attaches the kingdom of antichrist with the old Roman Empire. *
 - b. Represents seven kings. 17:10.
 - 1). Some see this as five emperors or forms of government in the Roman Empire. (Walvoord).
 - 2). Some see this as five great empires that persecuted God's people. (MacArthur).
 - * Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman, end-time federation and antichrist. *
3. The Ten Kings – 17:12-14.
 - a. Their identity. 17:12-13. See Rev. 13:1; Dan. 2:42-44; 7:7.
 - b. Their destruction. 17:14.
4. The waters. 17:15.
 - * Represents a worldwide false religious system of the tribulation period. *

II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT HARLOT. 17:16-18.

A. The Hatred of the Kings. 17:16.

1. They use her in the early days of the tribulation, but hate her.
2. They turn on her to destroy her when she is no longer useful.

B. The Purpose of God. 17:17.

* Another of many reminders in Revelation that our God is sovereign. *

III. THE SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.

After the rapture of the church the true Christians of every denomination will be taken from the earth. However, false Christians and the religious structure will be left behind. Other religious groups will also be left on earth. These will unite, perhaps under the leadership of the false prophet (Rev. 13), and will support the antichrist. They will ride upon the beast enjoying his favor until they are no longer needed. The kings who support the antichrist will reveal their hatred and turn on the great harlot to destroy her. At this time false religion or religious Babylon is destroyed. *