

**A PAINTED LADY ON THE BEAST**

Episode Fifteen: Revelation 17

Who is this gaudy prostitute, drunk on the blood of martyrs, who rides atop a scarlet beast? Her name is Babylon. She is the temptress who gives a human face to the beast who devours; the utopian dream that stirs hearts; a deception that lost paradise can be created out of creation by creatures apart from the Creator; the utopias offered by Pharaohs, Shahs, Caesars, Sultans, Emperors, revolutionaries, and the social engineers of our New World Order. Unless we look behind the glitter of this deception, we may find ourselves devoured by the beast.

1. **The Great and Seductive Prostitute** [Revelation 17:1&2]

*“Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”*

The prostitute’s punishment has already been declared in Revelation 14:8 & 16:19. In chapters 17&18, her destruction is described in graphic detail.

* **Her name is Babylon the Great**. *“The name written on her forehead was a mystery:*

*BABYLON THE GREAT*

*THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES*

*AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS*

*OF THE EARTH.”* [Rev. 17:3]

1. **Babylon is mentioned 287 times in Scripture, more than any other city other than Jerusalem**. She is birthed in Genesis Ten and will not die until Revelation Eighteen. Not even Jerusalem is as old or enduring as Babylon.
2. She was **a literal city on the Euphrates River** in what is now Iraq. Babylon appears in Genesis 11:1-10, as the first city state in history. You can visit her ancient gates at the Pergamum Museum in Berlin, or other remains of her at the British Museum in London. She was the cradle of the first great civilization in history—Mesopotamia to express organized hostility to our Creator.
3. She stands in Jewish Scriptures as the **arch enemy of God’s people.** She first destroyed Jerusalem and then took Israel into Babylonian captivity. In Jewish literature, Babylon is **the essence of all evil; the embodiment of cruelty; the metaphor for sin, lust, and greed**.
4. **Babylon is the counterfeit of God’s kingdom**. Satan’s substitute for the paradise our first parents lost, and the final paradise that our Savior promises to deliver. She is the utopian dream that stirs in the hearts of all who long for paradise lost. At her center is a ziggurat [the *Tower of Babel*] that reads the astrological signs in the heavens to find answers in creation rather than from the Creator. Babylon is creation, its creatures, and their creations promising to give what only God can deliver. Babylon is the personification of idolatry.
5. **Babylon is the home of the world’s first antichrist: NIMROD** [Genesis 10:8-12] This great-grandson of Noah is the mighty warrior. The hunter and gatherer of people. The first conqueror, empire builder, and architect of a one-world order where everyone speaks one language, worships at one tower, and thinks one way. He is the prototype of Pharaohs, Emperors, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Sultans, Czars, and a legion of conquerors who rampage across the earth, waging endless wars to bring elusive peace. The Babylon of St. John’s day was Rome.
6. **Babylon offers a counterfeit salvation—Satan’s perversion of heaven’s plan.** Long before God’s promise to Abraham, Satan anticipated the coming of Christ. According to those who have studied the religious history of ancient Babylon, her religion was founded by Nimrod’s wife, *Semiramus.* She was the high priestess of Babylonian idol worship, perhaps even one of the architects of the Tower of Babel. She claimed that she had given miraculous birth to her son, *Tammuz*. Her “supernaturally-born” son was deified as the savior of the world. It was even said that he was killed by a wild beast, and then rose from the dead. Baal was the Canaanite name for Tammuz. His mother was called “The Queen of Heaven” by the Canaanite Baal worshippers. [see Jeremiah 44:17-19, 44:25; Ezekiel 8:14]

**Note:** This Babylonian counterfeit of God’s Plan of Salvation, as it was manifested in Canaanite religion, constantly seduced and ensnared the Old Testament Jews. In Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, Babylon’s religion is at the heart of every religious salvation story that denies Christ, his death, burial, and resurrection as the only true gospel: from pagan religions, to works-centric Judaism, to Islam, to Christian cults. Is it any wonder that this Prostitute is doomed to destruction? [Rev. 17:2]

1. **Most importantly, Babylon gives a beautiful and seductive face to the beast.** All empires are in fact beasts: lions, bears, leopards, etc. They devours lesser creatures, cities and nations as prey. They feast on the weak, expand their territory to find even more prey. The live to eat, kill and procreate. Together, all the nation and empire Beasts have **killed 1.64 billion people** in their wars.

Nobody would be attracted to a beast, unless, of course, that beast wore a mask. The Babylonian empire was a beast of prey. But it presented itself with beautiful cities, hanging gardens, seekers of world peace, givers of social welfare, architects of glorious monuments, patrons of the arts. Babylon is Moscow, Paris, London, Washington D.C., New York City—the inspiring and seductive face that puts a soothing sound to the beast’s growl, interprets her slaughters of humans as just wars, and hides the bones of her victims under the rubble on which she builds her magnificent cities.

* ***“…who sits by many waters…”*** [Rev. 17:1]To put it another way, she sits by the seven seas. Babylon is a worldwide enterprise, international in scope. The angel later explains, *“The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, and languages.”* [Rev. 17:15] God scattered the people, and changed their languages at the Tower of Babel. [Genesis 11:8&9] Yet, like Nimrod of old, every reincarnation of Babylon, from Alexander the Great to the empire builders of our day, has tried to bring the nations, languages, tribes, and peoples of the earth into a **global government.**
* ***“…the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”*** [Rev. 17:2] Her promises of utopia turn people from the One who made him for himself, to give themselves to the utopian promises and false religion of Babylon. Like drunkards, they no longer can think straight.
* ***“Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman…”*** [Rev. 17:3] Where else would St. John find this prostitute? God gave our first parents a garden paradise. Babylon, in all of her repeated reincarnations, promises a utopian garden, but leaves a desert of desolation behind.
* ***“There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast…”*** [Rev. 17:3] We have seen this scarlet beast before in Revelation 13. This is the final reincarnation of the bloody beasts that have come before, only greater and more powerful—the FINAL BEAST ruled by the FINAL ANTICHRIST.

**Note:** The prostitute does not drive the Beast. Rather, in the original language, she sits passively on his back. He takes her where he wants to go. She is at his beck and command. He uses her the way all prostitutes are used. He hates her for her willingness to be used by him. And he will ultimately throw her off and devour her. [Revelation 17:16] At that time, there will be no more pretenses.

* ***“The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls.”*** [Rev. 17:4] She is the epitome of everything carnal that people long for—success in this world. Purple and scarlet were made from rare and costly dyes. In St. John’s day, purple and precious jewelry were worn only by the wealthiest. They were the marks of extreme luxury. Scarlet was the color of government. Roman senators wore togas with scarlet stripes as a mark of their authority. No one else was allowed to wear scarlet. Later, in Medieval days, scarlet robes were worn only by cardinals and popes. **Yet, outward appearances are deceptive: the cup she offers has only the foulest and corrupting of things to drink**.

The beast himself is not attractive. Beasts of prey are frightening. But, as St. Paul says, Satin masquerades as an “angel of light.” [2 Corinthians 11:14] Babylon is the façade, the mask, the beautiful face of the hideous beast. We are attracted to the image he projects—the painted seductress who offers us intoxicating delights. Eventually, when the inhabitants of a post-rapture age are completely depraved, the Beast will throw off the prostitute, devour her, and rise up in all his hellish evil—and the world will fall down and worship unvarnished, unscented, naked evil!

* ***“The name written on her forehead was a mystery…”*** [Rev. 17:5]

It may have been a mystery to St. John. It is no longer one to us. When we see the great world-system described at the end of chapter 17 [*“The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”* Rev. 17:18], we will know that this one-world government is ***“…the mother of prostitutes and the abominations of the earth.”*** [Rev. 17:6] But her true identity and danger will be lost on the kings, merchants, and people of the earth—as she has been since the Tower of Babel, and will be until it’s too late.

* ***“I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore the testimony to Jesus.”*** [Rev. 17:6] Why this slaughter of Christians by Babylon and its later reincarnations? Babylon demands absolute preeminence when it comes to its subjects’ world-life views. In the Third Reich, SS soldiers were required to take the *Hitler Oath*, swearing absolute obedience to him personally, even over their country’s constitution, family, or God. In Roman times, Christians were not martyred by the Babylon of their day because they worshipped a Jewish carpenter they had claimed had risen from the dead, and was God in the Flesh. There were more than 1,7000 Eastern cults and mystery religions beyond the recognized *Religio Romana* (official state religion). No one was persecuted from following other religions. Christians were fed to the lions because their first allegiance was to what St. Augustine called *The City of God*, and not to the cities of men. If Caesar asked them to do that which violated their Scriptures, they obeyed God first. In that, they became a clear and present danger to the state.

**Fully devoted Christians are almost always forced to be counter culture. They are a threat to any state that abandons biblical principles, and calls them to believe or behave in any manner that dishonors their Only Savior and Lord**. Famous historical researcher, David B. Barrett puts the number of Christians killed since Christ walked this earth to be at **Seventy Million**. And, yet, according to his studies, more Christians were martyred in the 20th Century than the total slain for their faith in the 2,000 years prior. The 21st Century is on a pace to match the 20th Century, and, should this be the Century of *The Great Tribulation*, the numbers will be astronomical! No wonder, ***“I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people…”*** [Rev. 17:6]

And, no wonder, St. John responds, ***“When I saw her, I was greatly astonished…”*** [John 17:6] Such mass murder (literally the attempted genocide of a religious group) should astonish anyone. This 70 million number dwarfs any other attempted genocide in history. But the angel replies, ***“Why are you astonished?”*** [Rev. 17:7]

He goes on to solve the mystery of the Whore called Babylon. Understanding who she really is, it shouldn’t shock us to see what she’s done. Nor should we be shocked when the Babylon of our day turns against us with fury. The only way we can avoid her fury is to go along with her game plan—to play it safe and compromise. But, to do that, is to suffer her fate in the *Coming Wrath.* **Babylon’s wrath can only last for a season. The Coming Wrath lasts for an eternity**. We should take heart in St. Paul’s words: *“For our light and momentary afflictions are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”* [2 Corinthians 4:17]

1. **In a world of *Babylon* wannabes, how will we know when *Babylon the Great* has appeared?** *“Then the angel said to me, ‘Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides…”* [Rev. 17:7] We already know who she is. The key is to know when she arrives. And that key is in understand the appearance of the beast and the symbolism in that appearance.

* **The Beast has been unleashed for one final assault on the earth.** *“The beast, which you saw once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction.”* [Rev. 17:8] This is hard to understand. Who is this final beast who once before roamed the earth and then ceased to exist?

As we read later about kingdoms and kings (beasts and antichrists) who have come and gone, maybe this is the best explanation: Remember, the beast has a fatal wound that has been healed. [Rev. 13:3] The beast never dies. He simply rises again and again: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, the Holy Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. Jesus said that many antichrists will rise up, as pseudo saviors of the world—as will the beasts they create, and the Babylon masquerade that makes them look so attractive. But this last BEAST will be the mega-Beast of the ages! And the final one, who will never again rise from hell.

**Look out for the unleashing of the Beast.** Now it seems as if he *“is not”*—but**you will know it when you see it**. Be prepared: The Great Tribulation is at hand. Not long after, the Rapture. And, after that, the Coming Wrath and soon destruction of this Beast, and the Dragon who controls it. *“The beast…will go to its destruction.”* [Rev. 17:8]

* **The Great Apostasy.** The inhabitants of the earth will be amazed and then worship the Beast [Rev. 17:8 & 13:8] Watch that key phrase for those beast worshippers (both Beast and Dragon)**: “…whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world…”** [vs. 8] In 2 Thessalonians 2, St. Paul says that the days before Christ’s appearing again will be **marked by a great *apostasy****.*  The Greek word means “falling away.” You will know that the end is near when there is a mess defection of professing Christians from biblical faith.

* **The Seven Heads of the Beast.** [Rev. 17:2,7, 9-11] *“The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings.”* [vv. 9&10] Many Bible scholars have interpreted this as Rome because she sits on seven hills. Therefore, they have interpreted this variously as final political order that will be centered in Rome (i.e. the European Union), or the Roman Catholic church at the head of a worldwide false religion.

There are two problems with this: 1) Seattle, Washington, famously sits on seven hills, as do other cities. 2) the Greek word is “mountains” not hills. We are on more solid ground to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.In Daniel’s prophetic vision of the future, ***mountains*** represent governments. In ancient times, city states were built strategically on the highest mountains in the area for both defensive reasons and a propaganda show of impregnable power. **These are seven kingdoms with seven kings at their head**.

*“Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain only for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is now, is an eighth king. He belongs to the other, and is going to his destruction.”* [vv. 10&11]These are **the five great beastly empires with their antichrists** who have come before (all have terrorized Israel, and would be well-known to John’s Messianic Jewish readers): **Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece**. **The one “who is**” in St. John’s day would be **Rome.** The **seventh** who is yet to come is most likely **a modern-day revival of Rome**—a one-world government, or federation of global powers in a co-operative economic and security network. But, according to Revelation 17:10, it will only last for a short time before it unravels.

The **eighth** will be **the final Beast, or world power**, put together and ruled by **the Great Antichrist**, who will use the vision of Babylon to seduce the nations and peoples of the world. His reign will be terrible, but, like all the beasts before him, he and his world order *“…is going to his destruction.”* [Rev. 17:11]

* **Ten horns and ten kings.** [Rev. 17:12-14] *“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom.”*  Most likely, this is a ten-nation confederation put together by the Antichrist as the core of his world order. [See the ten toes of Daniel 2:24-25] But remember, ten is a symbolic number of completeness. There may be many more than ten nations and their rulers. It could refer to all the nations of the world—a total global power. They will give all their power and authority to the Beast (the Antichrist and his one-world government). [vs. 13] Later, they will be the kings and nations that march to Armageddon to do battle with Jesus Christ. [vs. 14]

1. **The demise and death of the Whore called Babylon the Great.** [vv. 15-18] Like all prostitutes, Babylon exists to be used—to bring a religious and civil face to the evil and ferocious Beast. But the Beast hates wearing the mask. He hates the whore he is forced to carry. Now the Rapture has occurred. The saints are gone. God has abandoned the earth to his Wrath [verse 17] just as he hardened the heart of Pharaoh. **Question:** Why does the Antichrist abandon all vestiges of pretense by killing the prostitute? [vs 16] **The Answer is critical:** Without God’s restraining spirit, the man of lawlessness no longer has to hide behind appearances. The people left behind are so depraved that they will even embrace the foulest and most ferocious beast—worshipping him, even as he prepares to devour them. *“The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4]

**For all these reasons, we must prepare ourselves for what is to come so that we are not deceived. We must use a window of time, that is rapidly closing, to prepare our children and grandchildren, and to share the Gospel with all those who will be left behind to descend into this madness and wrath.**