

The Mystery of the Harlot Expounded

Revelation 17:7-11

The End Times

In my last post, we concluded unpacking **Revelation 17:1-6** in exploring **The Vision of the Harlot ~ Part 2**. In this post, we continue to focus on the **Harlot** by examining **Revelation 17:7-11** concerning **The Mystery of the Harlot Expounded**.

"Then the angel said to me, "Why are you astounded? I will tell you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that was carrying her. ⁸ The beast you saw once was, now is not, and will come up from the Abyss; but it is on its way to destruction. The people living on earth whose names have not been written in the Book of Life since the founding of the world will be astounded to see the beast that once was, now is not, but is to appear. ⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is sitting; also they are seven kings — ¹⁰ five have fallen, one is living now and the other is yet to come; and when he does come, he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ The beast which once was and now is not is an eighth king; it comes from the seven and is on its way to destruction." ~ Revelation 17:7-11 (CJB)

The beast you saw once was, now is not, and will come up from the Abyss; but it is on its way to destruction. The people living on earth whose names have not been written in the Book of Life since the founding of the world will be astounded to see the beast that once was, now is not, but is to appear. Few passages in **Revelation** have been the subject of more dispute among scholars who have attempted to interpret them than this explanation of the angel. Great care, therefore, must be exercised in determining precisely the parts of the divine revelation herein given.

The **scarlet beast** was introduced as the **Anti-Messiah**. The **scarlet beast** now ascends up out of the **Abyss** (bottomless pit). The word **destruction** appears twenty times in the Brit Hadashah, and it is the same word Yeshua uses when He calls Judas **the one meant for destruction** in John 17:12. **Destruction** is also used in II Thessalonians 2:3 to describe the coming **Anti-Messiah**.

This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is sitting. The only city in the world that has been known for many centuries by its characterization as being located on seven hills is Rome. ¹ For hundreds of years, there have been those who have tried to rebuild the Roman Empire. But, while they have attempted to, they have also failed. To unify the countries that cover the land area making up the old Roman Empire would seem an impossible task. However, due to recent changes in the political, geographical, and national landscape, it now looks as if it could quickly happen shortly. Where, when, and how is all of this going to come about?

The beginning was March 1957, when a meeting was held in Rome at the invitation of the Vatican. Soon after that, came the establishment of first the European Common Market. While the name has changed over the years the goals have not; it was later known as the European Economic Community, then just called the European Community beginning in 1993. In 2009, because of the treaty of Lisbon, all of this came under the more commonly known name of the European Union (EU). The European Union is both economic and political intending to not only unite Europe but also preparing the marketplaces of the world as a global community. All of this political and economic activity with the European (Roman) leadership makes way for the world-wide rule of the coming **Anti-Messiah**. The goal of European dominance in the world market will come about for trade and travel with the issuance of a common currency, which at this time is called Eurodollars! Despite Brexit, all of this is unfolding on the pages of our daily newspapers and may well be that which **Yochanan** wrote about over 1900 years ago.

¹ There are obviously more cities today that are said to be built on seven hills, e.g. San Francisco, but not when Yochanan recorded this passage.

Also they are seven kings —¹⁰ five have fallen, one is living now and the other is yet to come; and when he does come, he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ The beast which once was and now is not is an eighth king; it comes from the seven and is on its way to destruction.” Theologians hold two different views, based upon their interpretation of **verse ten**. Some believe the **seven kings** to be individual rulers who have lived and reigned while others see this as speaking of kingdoms or empires. If taken to mean **kings**, at the time **Yochanan** wrote the **Book of Revelation**, it is believed that five of the kings had already passed off the scene. **Domitian**, the sixth, was on the throne in Rome at the time **Yochanan** penned these words. More than five men had reigned as king before **Domitian**; however, the five chosen may have been a selection of exceptional monarchs in the course of Roman history. The other interpretation that holds them to be kingdoms rather than **kings** lists the five former kingdoms to be: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Whichever view one holds would seem to make little difference, as the main thing **Yochanan** is focused on is the **Roman Empire** (number six; “and one is”). Ray Stedman has some fascinating comments: ²

In this passage, the angel describes seven “kings” or forms of government. Five had passed into history, one was dominant in John’s day, and another would remain for a little while, and then an eighth “king”—the beast would come into being. What many people do not realize is that the sixth form of government, the one that dominated John’s era and which the angel described when he said, “one is,” is the longest-enduring form of government in human history: the imperial form. The Roman imperial line began with Julius Caesar (born 100 b.c., died 44 b.c.), who turned the Caesar surname of his Julian family into a title that became synonymous with “emperor.” The imperial line continued virtually until the fall of the Western Empire in a.d. 476. Yet, even though the line of the Italian Caesars came to an end many centuries ago, the imperial/caesarian form of government continued to hold power until 1918! In that one year both of the last two “Caesars”—the German Kaiser and the Russian Czar—were overthrown. The word Caesar in German is Kaiser; in Russian, it is “czar.” Thus the Imperial form of government has existed for some 1900 years, from the time of Julius Caesar until our own century. Following the sixth, or imperial form of government, the angel told John that a seventh was yet to come and would “remain for a little while.” Then would follow the eighth, which is the beast.

The conclusion, then, is that two kingdoms are still future. The seventh kingdom would be the ten-kingdom empire or the restored **Roman Empire**.

Special Comparative Note on Chapter 17:7-11 c³

Historicist Approach:

Historicists believe that **the beast** is Rome and the **seven kings** represent the seven forms of government under which the **Roman Empire** existed during history. The five already fallen are kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs ⁴ and military tribunes. The sixth, present in **Yochanan’s** day, were the Caesars. While there is no consensus on the eighth form, many believe it is the papacy.

Preterist Approach:

Preterists interpret **the beast** as Rome. Although not held by all, most equate the **seven kings** to the Caesars.

² A Layman's Commentary on Revelation by Don Jones.

³ Material in this post is taken from “Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated” by Steve Gregg. Notations in brackets, if any, are my comments.

⁴ A member of a permanent board or a special commission of ten members in ancient Rome, especially the commission that drew up Rome’s first code of law.

Futurist Approach:

Most **Futurists** take the **seven hills** as Rome and the **seven kings** as empires that have arisen in succession in history, i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The sixth is the **Roman Empire** and the seventh has not yet come. Some **Futurists** do agree with the **Historicists** on the seven forms of government under the which Rome had existed throughout history.

Idealist Approach:

Idealists don't appear to be united in their interpretation. Most seem to concur with the **Historicists** or **Preterists**.

In my next post, we'll continue to explore **Part 2 of Revelation 17:1-6.**