

THE REVELATION

SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

Chapter 16:20 – 17:8b

(d) The Islands and Mountains (16:20)

Rev 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Such a “great earthquake” occurs that John actually sees the islands move and the mountains shrink. Here, we must remember that John uses the word earth and not the word world. John is not speaking of all the islands and mountains of the whole world but rather of the islands and mountains of a specific plot of land, as large as it may be, covering at least ten countries called the Revived Roman Empire.

(e) The Hailstones Drop (16:21)

Rev 16:21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

Not only will the earthquake be the largest recorded on earth, but these hailstones most definitely surpass the records of hailstones of the past. The largest recorded hailstone in the United States was 8 inches in diameter. It fell in Vivian, South Dakota, on July 23, 2010, and it weighed 1.9375 pounds. John has just revealed that the hailstones of this *seventh bowl* will be about 50 times larger than any we have weighed and measured on Earth. Here is one more interesting fact about God’s creation: hail falls in the warmer months. For instance, hail in the southern United States occurs the most in March; the northern states must wait until May for their greatest chance for a hailstorm. But hailstorms generally fall in the northern hemisphere between May and September. In the future, when all the precious prophecies of the REVELATION have been fulfilled, perhaps the great city of Babylon should be ready in those months for an earthquake and a hailstorm like the world has never experienced. No wonder the people in Babylon and the surrounding nations will be fearful, but they will not be fearful enough to turn to God. Rather, they will curse him. But do we really know all there is to know about this great city of Babylon yet? In the next two chapters, we will learn much more about Babylon, and with that, we must be introduced to one more major participant in the story of the *End Times*. She is the *great harlot*.

The conclusion of the *seventh bowl of the wrath of God* ends with the introduction of the *great harlot*. She has been around in the world for a long time, and the REVELATION would not be complete if her ultimate fate was not included. As with the participants presented before, Scripture tells the story of her past, present, and future.

H. The Judgment from Heaven (17:1-18:24)

1. The Introduction of the Great Harlot (17:1)

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

For the first time in the REVELATION, the *great harlot* is mentioned. Nothing has been said about her to this point, yet the verse says she “sits on many waters.” This phrase must mean that she has been involved in world events for a significant period. How many waters does she sit on? In Revelation 17:15, the “waters” are defined as follows. *"The waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."* Therefore, we do not need to speculate about the “waters.” This *great harlot* sits on many “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” In other words, her influence is far-reaching on humanity around the World.

2. The Suiters of the Great Harlot (17:2)

Rev 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

The influence of this *great harlot* reaches right to the thrones of the powers of the kings of the Earth. Here, John uses the word *earth*, and he means it is not worldwide but restricted to certain plots of land that she controls.

The verse says that the “kings of the earth committed *acts of immorality*” with her. The word “immorality” is the proper translation for the Greek word *pore*; however, today, a better word is *adultery*. It means a sexual act outside the proper relationships established by God for husbands and wives here on earth. But, unless this *great harlot* is an actual human, it is impossible for her to have a sexual relationship with all the kings and “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” The “immorality” or *adultery* of this *great harlot* must be a metaphor for her interaction with the nations in an ungodly relationship of some kind. These kings willingly commit this “immorality” with her, and in so doing, the kings will make the people under their control drink the “wine of her immorality.” It seems that the kings are overly willing, and the people will be forced to interact with this *great harlot*.

In the Old Testament, we find God complaining about the religious *immorality or adultery* of the Nation of Israel. One example can be found in Jeremiah 23. In this example, the people of the Southern Kingdom had been led away by false prophets to worship false gods. In response, the LORD says the following to Jeremiah:

Jer 23:14 "Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

The relationship between the *Nation of Israel* on earth and the LORD is the topic here. When humans worship any god except the LORD God, they are *adulterers*. Every person who worships in the faiths of Rabbinic Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or any other variation or offshoot of these major religions of the world is considered a religious *adulterer* in God’s eyes just as bad as the *immorality of homosexuality* that was found and identified by Him in the villages of Sodom and Gomorrah. This *great harlot* must be the false religions found in the world that kings of the earth have

accepted and forced on the people of their kingdoms. What great multitude of people does she control with the “wine of her immorality?” What does “wine” mean? The word must also be a metaphor for her brand of false religion, her brand of theology, her brand of belief. The people are forced to drink her brand of faith from her system of religion. Her system is different from that of the LORD’s; therefore, the kings and people who follow her system are *adulterers* against the LORD. They will seek an improper relationship with a false god instead of a proper relationship with the true God. God also calls them *idolaters*.

3. The Scarlet Beast of the Great Harlot (17:3)

Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

Off to the wilderness, John was taken in the vision by one of the seven angels to be shown the “immoral,” *adulterous* relationship. It is plainly identified here! Her *adultery* is with the “scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.” We know this *beast*; it is the *Revived Roman Empire*. Therefore, the “kings of the earth” (17:2) are the rulers of *Britain, France, Spain, Italy, North Africa, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Syria and Egypt*. And the “many waters” (17:1) are the people of that empire and others who hold to her belief system. With that, we must look at other interesting details. John was carried “into the wilderness” to see this *beast*. The beast’s home was not in the wilderness; it was around the *sea*. This fact must mean that the *great harlot controlled the beast* from a distance. The *harlot*’s home was in the wilderness; the *beast*’s home was around the sea. Where was her home? We will address that shortly! At this point, we will ask the question, “*What does this great harlot look like?*”

4. The Dress of the Great Harlot (17:4)

Rev 17:4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,

Look at the words of this verse. This woman is a wealthy harlot adorned with all the best of the best this world has to offer. Purple and scarlet material has traditionally been reserved for the richest of humanity because the dye is extremely expensive to make. Gold, precious stones, and pearls have always been symbols of wealth throughout all the ages. We could take the time to look at each item she wore, but we already understand this image. Full-length films have portrayed harlots as major characters in their productions, and this verse has no doubt inspired their dress. Sadly, even cartoons portray such women in children’s movies. But through the ages, *harlots* have continued to dress in such gaudy attire, but underneath, the body soon becomes unhealthy, a place of disease that leads to death. So, too, is the body of this *great harlot*. Hers is an “abomination” and “uncleanness.” Notice the “gold cup” in her hand. Common people of John’s day used wooden or clay cups to drink. Only the wealthy used golden cups. The wealthy of John’s day were found in three places: the royalty, the slave owner, and the temple hierarchy. But even then, the common people were never allowed to drink from the golden cups of these three. Therefore, it was something special for this *great harlot* to offer her *golden cup* to the commoners of the *Revived Roman Empire*. We have already interpreted the LORD’s use of the Greek word for “immorality” as the Hebrew word translated *adultery*, and we associated it with the worship of false gods because the LORD commanded that we *should have no*

other gods. But what does the word “abominations” mean? It simply means *detestable*. Therefore, the deeds of this *great harlot* are *detestable and unclean (filthy)* in the eyes of the LORD.

5. The Name of the Great Harlot (17:5)

Rev 17:5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

This *great harlot* may be dressed in the wealth of the world while at the same time being filthy and detestable in all her ways. “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH,” will be marked on her forehead. We dare not run past this too fast. We have seen the name “Babylon the Great” twice before in chapters 14 and 16. Here, we have been given the key that unlocks the mystery of this *great harlot* and “Babylon the Great.” “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS,” what does that mean?

The Greek word for “Mother” is *meter*, which is the normal word we use to refer to the mother of a child. It is used 83 times in the New Testament in the normal context of the mother/child relationship concerning every possible scenario that involves an earthly mother. In that context, the *mother* is the one who gives birth to her offspring. However, it is used in the Bible two times in a different relationship. The word *mother* here is still used as giving birth to an offspring, but not one that is a human child. It is used as a metaphor for one who gives birth to a movement, a way of thinking, a theology, a way of life, or a business or entity. We find the first use of the word in this sense in Galatians, where Paul uses “mother” in an allegory.

Gal 4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. ... 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Paul intended this passage to be an allegory, and he said so in verse 24. The story is about the influence of the two sons of Abraham in the world. His oldest was Ishmael, and his descendants became the Arab people. About 621 AD, the religion of Islam was born among these people in Arabia. Since then, these people have claimed their inheritance through Ishmael to his father, Abraham. It was a true lineage through Sarah’s bondservant, Hagar. Ishmael was born to Abraham as a result of a sinful relationship with Hagar that was instigated by his wife, Sarah. Therefore, Ishmael was a child of Abraham’s flesh. He was not the child of the Spirit promised to Abraham and Sarah. In their rush to fulfill the LORD’s promise on their own, a child of the flesh was born. Isaac was Abraham’s second son, and he was the child of the Spirit, promised by the LORD to be born to Sarah, whose body was old and as good as dead for childbearing. Isaac became the father of Jacob,

whose name was changed to Israel. He became the father of twelve sons, and they became fathers of the twelve tribes of the Nation of Israel that we know today. In like manner, Ishmael had twelve sons who became the fathers of the first twelve Arabian tribes. Ishmael also had a daughter who married Esau, Jacob's/Israel's twin brother. Esau had twelve sons who became the fathers of a second wave of twelve tribes in Arabia. With that, Ishmael became the link to Abraham for twenty-four Arabian tribes, which still exist today. As a whole, they have embraced the religion often called the *Nation of Islam* and have sought to destroy the *Nation of Israel*. In Paul's allegory, the descendants of Hagar, the *Nation of Islam* and the flesh, were seen persecuting the descendants of Sarah, the *Nation of Israel* and the Spirit. In this passage, the word "mother" is directed toward Sarah, who gave birth in the spirit of the *Nation of Israel*. We know from the REVELATION that the *Nation of Israel* gave birth to the Child known as Jesus. It is important to note the prophecy in Paul's allegory – the descendants of Hagar, meaning the *Nation of Islam*, will not be heirs to the glories of the LORD and His bliss in eternity.

The second passage that uses the word "mother" is found here in Revelation 17:5, and it refers to "Babylon" and calls it the "MOTHER OF HARLOTS" to indicate that "Babylon the great" is the *great harlot* who gave birth to the greatest detestable things in all the world. As the *great harlot*, she is a repulsive, ancient, sinful woman disguised in her dress. Beneath the purple, scarlet, and gold is the violent, fraudulent, and deceptive religion that she is. Her tale of her sin is as old as the days of the rebellious building of the tower of Babel. Just 98 years after departing the Ark after the flood, idolatrous relationships with false gods were already prevalent among the family of Noah. He was still alive and would live until just eight years before the birth of Abraham. We must remember that Noah and Abraham were of the same line of family members who spoke the same language after the confusion at the tower of Babel and remained in that area after the eighteen families were scattered over the world by the LORD. It was from this same family line that brought about the Hebrew, Akkadian, Chaldean, Aramaic, and Arabic languages. Even though these languages are different today, similarities still exist that will allow someone in one language to communicate roughly with someone in one of the other languages. Communicating audibly is one thing; written communication is a different thing. The actual written word in each of these languages is quite different in most cases.

When the *Tower of Babel* event took place, the LORD God of creation was not the only god worshiped. In fact, because of His wrath of confusing the languages, perhaps only one of the family lines at the tower still worshipped the LORD – Nimrod surely did not. As the families were dispersed across the world, the various gods of Babel went with them. Ten of the major gods and goddesses of Babel have been depicted in stone carvings found in the area. A short description of each gives a picture of the warped theology developed in Babylon.

Tiamat was a goddess depicted as a dragon who often took the form as a giant dragon to wreak havoc on the younger gods.

Enlil was one of a triad of gods which included *Anu* and *Enki*. *Enlil* was considered the *lord of the air*. He was thought of as the *father of the gods*.

Enki, one of the triad of gods, was considered the *lord of the earth*. His residence was a place called *Abzu*. History tells us that Babylon was built on *Abzu*.

Anu, one of the triad of gods, was considered the *lord of the heavens* and the supreme source of all authority. However, as a god, he was rarely worshipped.

Marduk was the most famous deity of Babylon. He was the son of *Enki* and he was the god who killed the goddess *Tiamat* and carved up her body to create heaven and earth. *Marduk* lived in a temple in Babylon. He is also known as Merodach, Bel and Baal.

Ishtar was the goddess of beauty, sex and desire and a goddess who turned vengeful after she was rejected by the hero god Gilgamesh and she began to war with others after that. The Assyrian kings would pray to her before military campaigns.

Sin was the god of Ur, just south of the city of Babylon. His symbol was the bull and his sign was the waxing moon. He was therefore considered the *moon god*. *Sin* was the first offspring of *Enlil*. *Sin* was also considered the father of *Utu*, the sun god, and *Ishtar*, the goddess of beauty. The name of this same god, *Sin*, the *moon god*, would later be changed and worshipped as *Allah*.

Utu, also known as *Shamash*, was the god of the sun. In Akkadian, he was the son of *Enil* but in Sumerian he was the son of *Sin* as noted above. The relationship must be a misinterpretation between cultures. His claim to fame is that he was the giver of the laws to Hammurabi in the 18th Century BC.

Nisaba was the goddess of knowledge, writing and scribes. It is said that *Enlil* was her son-in-law.

Ashur was the god of the northern region of Mesopotamia where Abraham would have left after his father's death to go to the Promised Land. *Ashur* took the place of *Enlil* in that area.

Ninkasi was the goddess of beer or alcohol. She symbolized the role of women brewing beverages. A 3,900-year-old poem speaks of her soaking malt in a jar and filtering beer in a vat.

It is amazing how all these gods have some similarities to the true God. It seems only plausible that the true God was known by Noah and his descendants when they departed the Ark, but by the time of the tower, the family had become rebellious toward the LORD and guilty of immoral adultery in idolatrous relationships to false gods of man's creation. However, just as Adam and Eve did not commit the first sin on their own, they were prodded into it by the *great red dragon*. So, too, the families at the *Tower of Babel* were not alone in their sin; the great red dragon had no doubt deceived them into not obeying the LORD and into developing many forms of god-like characters. For that, Babylon became the mother of the *harlots* (world religions) of the world.

6. The Drink of the Great Harlot (17:6)

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

This *great harlot* has made it her goal to kill the "saints" of the LORD, especially those who boldly told the Gospel message about Jesus being the LORD of everything. John sees her "drunk." Dressed in the best, but drunk! John does not understand the meaning of this woman. He knows she is a *harlot*. Surely, he knows that *harlots* are disgusting. John also knows about the *beast* she is riding. He has written much about her in the previous pages. But why is this *great harlot* riding the *scarlet beast*? John wonders greatly about this.

a) The Description of Her Beast (17:7)

Rev 17:7 And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns."

The angel that took John to this wilderness knew exactly what John was thinking at the time. John wanted to know more about the *harlot* and why she was riding this *beast*.

b) The History of Her Beast (17:8a)

Rev 17:8a "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction.

The angel directly identified this *scarlet beast* as the same creature that the *red dragon* was waiting for when he was standing on the shore of the sea – the *beast from the abyss*. John had already written into the pages of the REVELATION the past, present, and future for this *beast*. He knew him well. But as we see, the angel says the *beast* “was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss.” Do not be confused with this language. In John’s day, the arrival of this *beast* was still in the distant future. For that matter, the arrival of this *beast* is still in our future. The *beast* was alive at one time. The heads of this *beast* tell us that story through the empires of *Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Mede, and Persian, Greek, and Roman*. But the *Roman Empire* died. After the death of the *Roman Empire*, one day, it will reform, and when it does, this great *harlot*, with all her disgusting acts, will be controlling it from the distant wilderness. And the purpose of this *beast* will be to destroy all who are “witnesses of Jesus.” Her intent is to spill their blood.

c) The Admirers of Her Beast (17:8b)

Rev 17:8b And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

By this time in the story, all the seals on the *Book of Life* have been broken for a long time, and it is clear whose names are written there and whose are not. Those who see this *beast* arrive will marvel at its existence. For an empire that was dead, to come back to life will seem like a miracle to all who see it happen. But more than that, to see that the *beast* is being controlled by a *great harlot* located outside the bounds of the *beast*’s empire will amaze even more. Think about the disparity between *Britain, Italy, France, Spain, North Africa, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Syria and Egypt* today. For those nations to unite in a new empire is beyond common sense. Today, it seems farfetched for five basically Christian countries to join forces with five basically Islamic countries in a happy union. Looking back in history, a senseless war between those same ten countries carried on from 1095 AD until 1492 AD between the Church and Islam, and nothing was gained except many deaths on both sides and the changing of a lot of land here for a lot of land there. For example, Islam may have gained the country of Macedonia in 1453 AD, but it lost Spain to the Church in 1492 AD – a basic trade in square miles of land. The war of swords could not unite those countries, but perhaps, in the future, the war of lies will be led by the *great harlot of Babylon*.