

## **REVELATION 17**

**I. INTRODUCTION / BKGRD.** – Tonight...Indiana Jones and the Tower of Babel! So put on your archaeologist's hat, grab your bullwhip and hang on for the ride of a lifetime!

In chapters 17 & 18, John deviates once again from the chronological unfolding of future history and pulls the curtain back to give a flashback to the development of the 2 great dynamics behind the Antichrist's last world empire: religious Babylon in ch. 17 and commercial Babylon in ch. 18; both are ultimately destroyed by God.

“**Babylon**” is mentioned 281 x's in the Bible, starting in Gen. 10:10 as one of the cities built by Nimrod on the Plains of Shinar. Nimrod was the son of Cush, the son of Ham, the son of Noah!

About 605BC Nebuchadnezzar of the revived Neo-Babylonian Empire inscribed on the Tower of Babel (Arabic *Burj Babil*; like the Burj Dubai, the world's tallest building? Yup!):

A brick removed from the ziggurat is inscribed, “*TOWER OF BABEL BRICK NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON, GUARDIAN OF THE TEMPLES ESAGILA AND EZIDA, FIRSTBORN SON OF NABOPOLASSAR, KING OF BABYLON.*” 33cm x 33 cm x 9cm; just over 1' square and 3 ½" thick, used as face-brick.

Nebuchadnezzar ruled the Babylonian Empire 605-562 BC and per his own hand rebuilt and topped the Tower of Babel; Nimrod had orig. built it (see Gen. 10:6-12; 11:1-9). This marks the origins of “Babylon the Great.” A ;large religious and economic power opposed to God...

Modern day Tower of Babel ruins (on the outskirts of ancient Babylon-current day Iraq) are currently 150' above the plain approx. 575 ft. square. According to Herodotus, the Greek historian who visited Babylon in 440BC, it was 8 levels tall, reached as tall as a 30-story skyscraper and was 660 ft. square at the base. Herodotus wrote, “*It has a solid central tower, one furlong square [1/8 mile or 660 ft.], with a second erected on top of it and then a third, and so on up to eight. All eight towers can be climbed by a spiral way running around the outside, and about halfway up there are seats for those who make the journey to rest on.*” The Greeks called the tower *Borsippa*, which means “Tongue-tower.” Borsippa was an important ancient city of Sumer, built on both sides of a lake about 11.0 miles SW of Babylon on the east bank of the Euphrates (one of the 4 rivers mentioned in conjunction with the Garden of Eden; see Gen. 2:10-14 “*A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.*

*11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.*

*12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)*

*13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.*

*14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

Today the Tower of Babel's ruins are called *Birs Nimrud*, “The Tower of Nimrod.” The Tower of Babel was demolished by Alexander the Great (ca. 323 BC).

The LORD spoke through Jeremiah and said Babylon would fall and never rise again; she would “*never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation....so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it*” (Jer. 50:39-40), thus “Babylon” in Rev. 17 and 18 MUST be a SYMBOLIC name ; the actual city of Babylon will NOT be rebuilt as the final world empire!

Chapter 17 depicts a corrupt, perverted religious system, which at first is used by the Antichrist, but then destroyed as her usefulness expires. Two predominant symbols are represented here in this most enigmatic chapter in the Book of Revelation; a HARLOT and a BEAST (w/ 7 heads and 10 horns).



Let's read the whole chapter first, then we'll try to make sense of the details....

## II. TEXT

**v. 1:** "**The great prostitute**" (KJV, "whore;" other versions have "harlot") is the "great city" where a false religious belief system is centered; very powerful and influential over many nations ("**many waters**"). The angel gives her identity in v. 18.

Anytime the Bible uses the word "**prostitute**" (52 x's in the NIV!) in a symbolic sense, it always means one who is spiritually unfaithful to God and chasing after false religious systems:

- Exodus 34:15-16 "*Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same.*"
- Lev. 20:6 "*I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people.*"
- Num. 15:39 "*...you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.*"
- Both Isaiah (Isa. 1:21) and Ezekiel charged Jerusalem, "*You trusted in your beauty and played the harlot.*" (Ezek. 16:15); i.e., she had been unfaithful.

The Church is the faithful Bride of Christ, holy and pure. To deny Christ is spiritual adultery; to chase after the things of this world (materialism) is spiritual adultery; anything we place a higher priority on than God, is spiritual adultery.

"**Many waters**" - interpreted for us in v.15; in Jer. 51:13 Babylon was addressed, "*O you who dwell by many waters....*"

**v. 3 "Beast"** = Antichrist of chapter 13, the beast that arose from the "sea" of humanity. Judgment has already been pronounced (cf. 14:8).

**v. 5 "Mystery"** -- meaning hidden except to the initiated: mystery is that Babylon = Rome. "**Babylon**" mentioned more than 280 x's in the Bible! See 14:8;

Tacitus, the Roman orator and historian (56-120 AD), called Rome "*the place into which from all over the world all atrocious and shameful things flow and where they are most popular!*" Seneca called Rome "*a filthy sewer.*"

"**Babylon**" (city) [BAB-uhl; sounds like Hebrew for "confusion"] A great city built in the plain of Shinar (first found in Gen. 10:10; Tower of Babel destroyed in Gen. 11). Within its walls, its inhabitants began construction on a temple "that reaches to the heavens." The Lord intervened, confusing the languages of its builders, and scattering them over the earth (Gen 11:1-9, as pointed out previously).

**v. 6:** Rome did not simply persecute the Christians as a legal necessity, but took a fiendish delight in hounding Christians to death, especially under Nero -- Rome fire 64 AD; killed Peter and Paul, 67/68 AD; Tacitus: Annals. Cf. Foxe's Book of Martyrs or DC Talk and the Voice of the Martyrs', Jesus Freaks.

"**Rome**" -- Notable as the capital city of the Roman Empire, situated at the first ford from the mouth of the Tiber River, halfway up the W coast of Italy. Traditionally founded on the Palatine Hill in 753 BC, it grew to encompass the seven hills of Rome, thus has historically been called "The City that sits on Seven Hills" since antiquity. It was ruled by kings until 510 BC, after which a republic was established, lasting until 31 BC, when Augustus Caesar became its first emperor. Augustus began massive reconstructions on Rome in the 1st century AD, and claimed to *have "found the city built of brick and left it built of marble."* The magnificent and

elaborately constructed temples and public buildings of Rome contrasted sharply with the crowded multi-story tenements that housed the general populace, whose numbers exceeded 1 million by NT times.

**v. 8: "Once was, is not now, and will be..."** -- an obvious imitation of Christ (cf. the Lamb's description in 1:18; 2:8). Cf. mortal head wound "miraculously" healed, Rev. 13:3. Seems to mean that the beast appeared once, is not presently evident, but will in the future appear again. So also, the so-called Revived Roman Empire which was, is not now, but will be in the future. (Today's EU, formed by the Treaty of Paris in 1952 and the Treaty of Rome in 1957). Though evil is persistent and widespread today, someday it WILL be destroyed!

**v. 9: "Seven hills"** -- Rome was originally a colony founded in 753 BC. on 7 hills on the E. side of the Tiber River. See OVERHEADS 6, 7, 8, 9-13: EU's stamp and coin image: a woman riding a beast atop 7 hills!!! The symbol of the European Parliament is a woman riding a beast atop seven hills. OH 9 is a statue in front of the "European Union Headquarters" in Luxembourg of Europa riding a beast.

This is a representation from classical Greek mythology of an affair between the Greek god Zeus and the legendary beauty Europa. Zeus spotted and fell in love with the young princess as she picked flowers. He changed himself into a handsome bull and carried her off to the island of Crete, where she bore him 3 sons. In 1580, the Italian artist Paolo Veronese rendered this tale into his classic painting, "The Rape of Europa." The European continent was originally named after Europa: the official Internet site of the European Union is <http://europa.eu.int>.

Perhaps the Brussels, Belgium headquarters will be relocated to Rome because of the wars, meteorite and asteroid impacts, earthquakes, economic situation?

**v. 10:** Some have said (Csmith included) that there had been 5 emperors at the time of John's writing? Nope: Domitian (81-96 AD) was the 11<sup>th</sup> Roman emperor starting with Caesar Augustus (27BC – 14AD).

Possibly, the major world empires since Babylon came into existence:

- Assyria,
- Egypt,
- Babylon,
- Medo-Persian,
- Greece;

These "**5 have fallen**" (from the standpoint of John's day). "**One is**" refers to the Roman empire; the last kingdom is that of the Antichrist (European Union, currently 28 member nations, with another 3 candidates waiting).

**v. 11:** Speaks of the Antichrist himself and his kingdom. In 13:3 we saw the Antichrist receive an apparently fatal head wound, in a poss. assassination attempt: Zec. 11:17, "*Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!*"

**v. 18:** John identifies for us a specific city: "**the seven heads are seven mountains.**" The city of Rome is built on seven hills. From ancient times, Rome has been known as "The City of Seven Hills." They are named: Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Palatine, Caelian, Capitoline, Aventine.

### III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

- In 1804, Napoleon summoned Pope Pius VII to leave Rome and come to Paris in order to crown him Emperor of France. Knowing the one who crowns the emperor will always have a voice of power with the emperor, Pius showed up with the crown in hand. But just as he was about to place the crown on Napoleon's head, Napoleon grabbed it from the Pope and crowned himself! Horrified, Pope Pius



immediately understood the implication: Napoleon has wrested all power from Rome. And the day is coming when the Antichrist will do the same . . .

- At the Rapture, all true believers in Jesus Christ are physically and literally removed from the Earth “*in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Corinthians 15:52). There will be an ecumenical union between Islam and Rome; the Antichrist will use this amalgamated abomination only as long as it serves his purposes...then it will be destroyed in what looks to be a *nuclear* event! Does that sound a little too far-fetched? Read on...
- Oct. 25,2011 in a communiqué from VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI has invited 300 religious leaders to a meeting in Assisi in Italy to repudiate “violence in the name of God” amid growing tensions fueled by fundamentalists across the world. The day of inter-religious council, which was held on Thursday in St. Francis of Assisi’s birthplace, is intended to be a “journey of reflection, dialogue and prayer for peace and justice in the world,” the Vatican said. Over 50 Islamic representatives are expected to attend the talks from several countries, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. They will be joined by Jewish Rabbis, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Bahai’s, Taoists, Confucianism and other traditional and animistic religions from Africa and America.
- Pope Benedict went to the Islam’s Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey in 2006...”The Roman (centered in ROME) Catholic Church does officially believe Muslims worship the same God. ...”
- All false religious belief systems will be ultimately be destroyed; Jesus said, “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). Some day, **Truth** will reign supreme! The end-times world dictator will use the apostate, religious system of his day to advance his own personal agenda. When he is finished with this false religious system, he will destroy it.