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By Dan Maines

Revelation 17

Revelation 17:1-2

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 prostitute who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of sexual immorality, and those who live on the earth became drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality."

† The great prostitute represents apostate Jerusalem, which abandoned her covenant with God and allied with Rome. "Many

waters" symbolize peoples and nations she influenced.

† Proof, Jeremiah 2:20 and Ezekiel 16 describe Jerusalem as a harlot committing adultery with the nations. Josephus (Wars 4.3.9) records her alliances and betrayals that led to her downfall.

Revelation 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.

† The scarlet beast is Rome, arrayed in imperial power. The woman sitting on the beast shows Jerusalem riding on Rome's authority, complicit in her own destruction.

† Proof, John 19:15 "We have no king but Caesar." By rejecting Christ, Jerusalem chose to ride upon the beast.

Revelation 17:4-5

The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls, holding in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her sexual immorality, and on her forehead a name was written: a mystery, "Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth."

† The attire of purple and scarlet mirrors the colors of the temple priests' garments, but here it is corrupted, showing her outward beauty and inward filth.

† The cup parallels Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon made the nations drunk with her wine. Jerusalem became the new Babylon in her rebellion.

Revelation 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.

† Jerusalem's guilt is clear: she killed the prophets and the saints (Matthew 23:37).

† Proof, Josephus (Wars 4.5.2) records that even during the siege, Jerusalem's leaders shed innocent blood within the city, drunk with violence.

Revelation 17:7-8

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 beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who live on the earth, whose names have 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."

† The beast "was, is not, and will come" refers to the succession of Caesars. Nero "was," his death created a gap "is not," and Vespasian's rise "will come."

† Proof, Tacitus (Histories 1.2) describes the chaos after Nero's death, when Rome seemed to collapse, yet revived under Vespasian.

Revelation 17:9-10

Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

† Rome, the city of seven hills, is clearly identified. The seven kings are the Caesars: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius (five fallen), Nero (the one who is), Galba (the one to remain briefly).

† Proof, Suetonius records Galba's reign lasted only seven months, fulfilling this prophecy.

Revelation 17:11

The beast which was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

† The eighth is Vespasian, who rose after the chaos of the year of the four emperors, yet is of the seven because he continued the line of imperial rule.

† Proof, Josephus (Wars 4.10.3) hails Vespasian as the one to bring Rome stability, though destined for destruction.

Revelation 17:12-13

The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

† The horns represent client kings and regional rulers who allied with Rome during the Jewish war.

† Proof, Josephus (Wars 3.4.2) lists rulers from the east who supplied troops to Rome.

Revelation 17:14

These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.

† Rome and her allies opposed Christ by persecuting His people, but the Lamb triumphed. The victory of the saints is through faith, not military might.

Revelation 17:15-16

And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the prostitute sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make her desolate and

naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire."

† The irony is that Jerusalem, who allied with Rome, is destroyed by the very beast she trusted.

† Proof, Rome burned the city and temple in AD 70 (Josephus, Wars 6.4.5).

Revelation 17:17-18

For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

† The great city is Jerusalem, guilty of covenant adultery and now judged. Rome was God's instrument of wrath, fulfilling His prophetic word.

† Proof, Jesus declared in Matthew 23:35-38 that all the blood of the righteous would come upon that generation, and Jerusalem would be left desolate.

How it applies to us today

† Trusting in worldly power brings destruction. Jerusalem's alliance with Rome ended in betrayal and ruin.

† God's sovereignty over history is absolute, as even Rome fulfilled His prophetic purpose.

† The Lamb reigns, and His people are called to faithfulness, not compromise.

† The harlot's judgment assures us that God vindicates His saints and avenges their blood.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Jeremiah 2:20; Ezekiel 16 – Jerusalem as a harlot

- † Jeremiah 51:7 – Babylon's cup
- † Matthew 23:35-38; 23:37; John 19:15 – Jerusalem's guilt and alliance with Rome
- † Daniel 7 – beast imagery
- † Psalm 2:6 – Zion's king
- † Josephus, Wars 3.4.2; 4.3.9; 4.5.2; 4.10.3; 6.4.5 – alliances, corruption, Rome's destruction of Jerusalem
- † Tacitus, Histories 1.2 – chaos after Nero
- † Suetonius, Galba 1 – short reign of Galba
- † Sibylline Oracles, Book 5 – Nero's return myth

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