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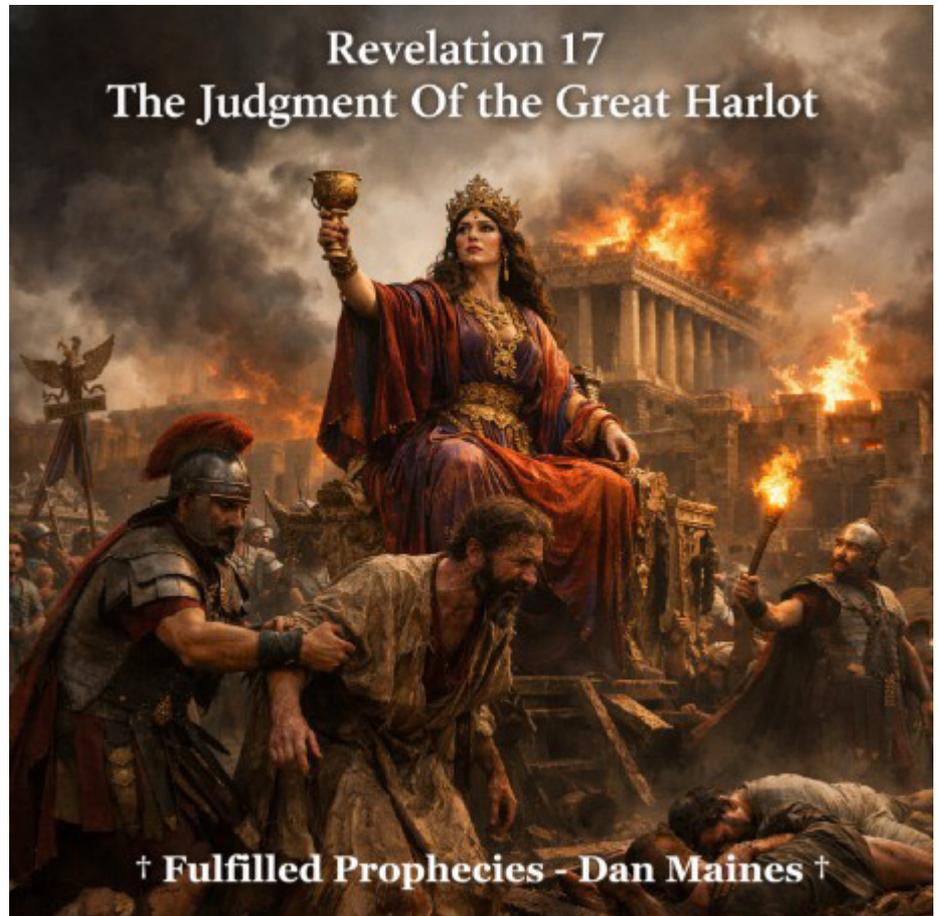
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Revelation 17 The Judgment Of The Great Harlot



By Dan Maines

Revelation 17 The Judgment Of The Great Harlot

Introduction

† Revelation 17 reveals one of the clearest judgments in the entire book. John is shown the downfall of a city that once belonged to God but became spiritually corrupt and violent toward His people.

† The imagery of a prostitute is not new language. The prophets repeatedly described Jerusalem this way when she abandoned

the covenant and pursued alliances with foreign powers.

† Isaiah had already used this language long before the first century when he said How the faithful city has become a prostitute, describing Jerusalem's corruption (Isaiah 1:21).

† The vision explains why judgment came upon that city and how the Roman Empire became the instrument of God's justice in AD 70.

† This chapter also identifies the beast, the kings, and the political structure that brought about the destruction Jesus warned about during His ministry.

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 **harlot** 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 **harlot** represents apostate Jerusalem, which abandoned her covenant relationship with God and formed political alliances with Rome and the surrounding nations.

† The prophets had already used this language to describe Jerusalem. Jeremiah 2:20 and Ezekiel 16 both portray the city as a woman committing adultery with foreign powers.

† The phrase many waters represents peoples and nations influenced by Jerusalem's religious authority throughout the Roman world.

† Josephus records the political corruption and alliances within Jerusalem that eventually contributed to the catastrophic war

with Rome (Josephus, Wars 4.3.9).

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 represents the Roman imperial power that dominated the Mediterranean world in the first century.

† The woman sitting on the beast shows the relationship between Jerusalem and Rome. The leadership of Jerusalem relied on Roman authority and political protection.

† This alliance is revealed clearly in John 19:15 when the chief priests declared We have no king but Caesar.

† By rejecting Christ and acknowledging Caesar, Jerusalem placed herself under the authority of the empire that would later destroy her.

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 harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

† Purple and scarlet were colors associated with royalty and priesthood. These colors mirror the garments connected to temple authority.

† The imagery shows outward religious beauty covering deep spiritual corruption within the leadership of Jerusalem.

† The golden cup represents spiritual corruption spreading outward. Jeremiah 51:7 described Babylon as a golden cup that made the nations drunk.

† By rejecting Christ and persecuting His followers, Jerusalem became the new Babylon in the prophetic sense.

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.

† Jesus directly accused Jerusalem of killing the prophets and persecuting God's messengers.

† Matthew 23:37 records Jesus saying Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

† Jesus also declared that all the righteous blood shed on earth would come upon that generation (Matthew 23:35).

† The city that should have welcomed the Messiah instead shed the blood of His followers.

† Josephus describes violent internal bloodshed during the siege of Jerusalem where innocent people were murdered within the city itself (Josephus, Wars 4.5.2).

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 phrase was, and is not, and will come reflects the political upheaval surrounding the Roman emperors during this time.

† Nero ruled during the early persecution of Christians. After his death the empire entered the chaotic period known as the Year of the Four Emperors.

† Tacitus records the instability that followed Nero's death when the empire seemed close to collapse before stabilizing again under Vespasian (Tacitus, Histories 1.2).

† The beast appears wounded yet revived, reflecting the continuation of imperial authority even through political crisis.

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 was famously known as the city built upon seven hills, making the identification unmistakable to first century readers.

† The kings correspond to the line of Roman emperors leading to the Jewish war.

† Five had fallen, one is refers to Nero during John's time, and the one who remains briefly refers to Galba.

† Suetonius records that Galba ruled only a short time before being overthrown, confirming the prophecy that he would remain only a little while (Suetonius, Galba 1).

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 refers to the restoration of Roman authority under Vespasian following the chaos of multiple short reigns.

† Although he appears as another ruler, he continues the same imperial system.

† Josephus describes Vespasian as the emperor who restored stability to Rome during this turbulent time (Josephus, Wars 4.10.3).

† Even this renewed imperial power ultimately moves toward destruction under God's sovereign plan.

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.

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

† Many eastern rulers provided military assistance to the Roman campaign against Judea.

† Josephus lists multiple rulers and allied forces that supported Rome's military operations (Josephus, Wars 3.4.2).

† Their unified purpose strengthened Rome's campaign that ultimately destroyed Jerusalem.

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.

† Even though Rome and Jerusalem opposed Christ and persecuted believers, their power could not defeat the Lamb.

† Christ's victory was accomplished through His death, resurrection, and the spread of the gospel.

† The faithful followers of Christ share in that victory through their allegiance to Him.

† The destruction of Jerusalem confirmed the authority of Christ and validated His warnings to that generation.

Revelation 17:15-16

And he said to me, The waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

† The waters represent the widespread influence Jerusalem held among Jewish communities across the empire.

† The same Roman power she relied upon would become the instrument of her destruction.

† Rome's armies surrounded Jerusalem and burned the city and the temple.

† Josephus records the burning of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple during the siege of 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.

† Even Rome's actions were under God's sovereign control.

† Revelation already identified the great city as the place where the Lord was crucified, clearly pointing to Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8).

† The destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled the warnings Jesus gave during His ministry.

† Jesus directly predicted the Roman siege and called it the days of vengeance in which all things written would be fulfilled (Luke 21:20-22).

† Matthew 23:35-38 records Jesus declaring that the blood of the righteous would come upon that generation and that their house would be left desolate.

Historical References

† Josephus documented the corruption, violence, and alliances within Jerusalem that led to the Jewish war and the destruction of the city.

† Tacitus recorded the political chaos following Nero's death and the restoration of imperial stability under Vespasian.

† Suetonius recorded the short reign of Galba, confirming the brief rule described in the prophecy.

† Early Christians fled Jerusalem before the Roman siege after remembering Christ's warning to escape the city (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5).

How It Applies To Us Today

† Religious appearance cannot hide spiritual corruption.

† Trusting political power instead of trusting God leads to destruction.

† God remains sovereign over world events and even powerful empires serve His purposes.

† The Lamb reigns as Lord of lords and His people are called to remain faithful to Him.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Who is the great harlot in Revelation 17?

A: The description matches apostate Jerusalem which rejected Christ and persecuted the prophets and saints. Matthew 23:37 and Revelation 17:6 identify the city guilty of killing God's messengers.

Q: What do the seven heads represent?

A: They represent the seven hills of Rome and the sequence of Roman emperors leading up to the Jewish war. Revelation 17:9-10 explains the order of these rulers.

Q: Why is Jerusalem called Babylon?

A: Babylon represents rebellion against God. When Jerusalem rejected Christ and persecuted believers she became spiritually like Babylon. Jeremiah 51:7 and Revelation 17:5 connect this imagery.

Q: Did Jesus predict this judgment?

A: Yes. Jesus warned that Jerusalem would be judged for killing the prophets and rejecting Him. Luke 21:20-22 and Matthew 23:35-38 describe the coming destruction.

Q: Why is the woman called a harlot instead of simply a wicked city?

A: The Bible uses harlot imagery when God's covenant people abandon Him and form alliances with foreign powers. Isaiah 1:21 and Ezekiel 16 describe Jerusalem this same way long before the first century. Revelation continues that prophetic language to show that Jerusalem broke her covenant with God and pursued political protection through Rome.

Q: What does it mean that the woman is drunk with the blood of the saints?

A: It shows that the city had become guilty of persecuting God's people. Jesus said Jerusalem killed the prophets and those sent to her (Matthew 23:37). Revelation 17:6 repeats that charge by describing the city as drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus.

Q: Why did the beast turn against the harlot if they were allied together?

A: Revelation explains that God placed it in their hearts to carry out His purpose (Revelation 17:17). Jerusalem trusted Rome for political survival, but the same empire she depended on became the instrument of her destruction when the Roman armies destroyed the city in AD 70 (Luke 21:20-22).

Q: How do we know the great city refers to Jerusalem?

A: Revelation already identified the great city as the place where the Lord was crucified (Revelation 11:8). Jesus also said that the blood of the prophets would come upon that generation in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:35-37), which matches the description of the city in Revelation 17.

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

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Source Index

† Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 11:8; Luke 21:20-22; Matthew 23:35-38; Matthew 23:37; John 19:15; Jeremiah 2:20; Ezekiel 16; Jeremiah 51:7; Isaiah 1:21; Daniel 7; Psalm 2:6

† Josephus, Wars 3.4.2; 4.3.9; 4.5.2; 4.10.3; 6.4.5; Tacitus, Histories 1.2; Suetonius, Galba 1; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5

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