

Scene Six: Seven Backfires of Babylon

MYSTERY:
**BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE
ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

John sees this woman and marvels. She looks good and she's seductive. But we're looking at much more than a prostitute. To them, Babylon was the place of evil. This is the image of worldliness and sin. Think about the enticement of sin – it's much like harlotry. It's like the poisonous apple – on the outside it may appear to be good, but inside is death. Wordliness in all its forms tries to lure us into its snare. Even John begins to feel himself fall into a great stupor at the sight of it.

The angel rebukes him and explains this mystery. Now let's note that a mystery in the Scriptures simply means that you either know it or you don't. The ones who know it are the ones to whom it's been revealed. It's only a mystery to those who don't have ears to hear or eyes to see. Now sometimes we feel like we get lost in the middle of visions – and we feel like maybe we just don't have those ears or eyes. But take heart, John – the one who is having this vision, is in the same boat. And this is what the book of Revelation is about – to reveal these things to us, not conceal. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches. (**1 Corinthians 14:33**).

This scenario of a practical interpretation of the mystery through a guide is not unfamiliar. Remember earlier in this very book – Jesus explains at the end of the first chapter the vision John saw of the Christ amidst the lampstands – he tells John “the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels (*messengers*) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.” (**Revelation 1:20**)

This whole passage is similar to **Daniel 7** – in fact they are addressing the same thing. Daniel prophesies the coming of Christ's Kingdom, and he was spot on (or God was) that Christ would come to establish His Kingdom during the time of the Roman Empire. After receiving a very similar vision to that of John, He was distressed because he didn't understand, but the angel who was guiding him through the vision explains it, exactly like he does for John.

At the end of the chapter John is told “the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” (**Revelation 17:18**) She sits on seven mountains. There's no doubt we're talking about the city of Rome.

Rome is the manifestation of wordliness at this time. Most specifically, this prophesy deals with that Empire. However, it most certainly applies at any time to the nation that opposes God and persecutes His people.

The Beast

The beast in question here is analogous to the fourth beast of Daniel. In John's vision we're going to see more specifically how it lives and how it dies. These beasts always seem to represent a king, or by extension, a kingdom. In **Daniel 7**, we clearly see the actual **Babylonian Empire**, the **Medo-Persian**, the **Grecian**, and finally the **Roman Empire** represented as beasts. These are also seen from another angle as four parts of a statue in the dream of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel prophetically interprets for him (**Daniel 2**). Skeptics have tried to claim that this was written much later on the sole basis that the prophecy was so accurate, yet it was without doubt made by Daniel (and has been around ever since) during the Babylonian rule, much longer than anyone could have known about the kingdoms to come, or the coming of the Messiah.

Daniel 2:44-45

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

Without a doubt this beast refers to the destructive power of the Roman Empire and the Emperors themselves, who persecuted God's people. God is using Rome as an example of His judgment on the ungodly. It is quick, painful, and righteous – as we'll see.

The Seven Heads

“Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.” (**Revelation 17:9**)

This is the same phrase used elsewhere – it's not a riddle, it's not a secret, but it's for the person that understands what's going on. Some say this is code language, but really it's no more in code than Daniel would have been. It has more to do with those who have been given the Spirit of understanding.

1 Corinthians 2:6-9 - However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

Everybody knows about the Seven Hills of Rome. They have *always* been a key feature of description for the city. They were a prominent aspect of Roman mythology and idolatry.

God is making it clear to the Christians of the day that He has things under control, that their persecutor will not go unpunished, and that the saints have none but glory ahead.

The Seven/Eight, Ten/Eleven Kings

What?

I know, I know. Let me clarify this. I've asked it myself, and you probably do too. The question here is: why, all of a sudden, are we starting to talk about some pretty clearly literal references to Rome and certain kingdoms and kings? We've already established that the Revelation is a book of symbols – as is all “*apocalyptic*” (revealing) language. Well really, this is just like the seven churches at the beginning of the book. *Were there seven actual churches under discussion? You bet. Did they represent and apply to all the churches? You better believe it.*

Likewise here, Rome is **actually, literally, and historically** under consideration. And likewise, it is **symbolic** of similar circumstances at any time – even that final Day.

(on the interpretation of Scripture)

There are those who demand all Scripture be interpreted literally, unless we're absolutely forced to figurize. This may or may not have an appearance of devotion at times, but the truth is – it's not a solid method. Though it is quite true that the majority of the New Testament (and even the Old) was written quite plainly, such absolutes are misled and misleading. Likewise, there are those who would have the entire Bible as figurative. This is just as ignorant as the first. And the same is true for Revelation – some good, honest believers would have the entire book of Revelation as purely symbolic. While this may be close, it would be ignoring the context, and the valid method of interpretation. An accurate interpretation can only come from (God Himself) the context of the Scriptures themselves.

Sometimes this is easier than other times. Yet in Revelation we see the context and the language itself demands symbolism, but we cannot apply this absolutely. There's a balance.

Just like in the other books of apocalyptic prophecy there are moments of indisputable clarity, where we're actually being explained the revelation in plain speech. This is one of those moments. God wants to make sure the point is made. He knows John (and we) need a little extra help in understanding the situation, just like Daniel did. So for the same reason

He gives us a Helper, He helps us here.

For a more detailed description of these kings, see the attached illustrations. What we want to focus on though, is the big picture. **What's important about these kings is:**

The beast was, and is not, and yet is.

What's important here is the Nero Redivivus myth. Nero was one of the worst emperors, especially in his persecution of the saints. The idea was that Nero would return and do it again. God takes that and shows that there's going to be a deceitful appearance of exactly that, yet it takes place according to the will of God. These “*extra kings*” in Daniel's and John's visions (see attachment) are a kind of resurrection of this former evil, yet only in appearance, as opposed to the Resurrection of Christ.

They give their kingdom and authority to the beast even though they “hate the harlot”, bringing destruction on them both. This is exactly how Rome, and every single world power, eventually falls – it's always been true. Corruption is a nasty beast.

Matthew 3:24-26 - If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14)

The Many Waters

The harlot sits on many waters – these are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (languages). This is a dominating world power who sits on and crushes the people of the earth, especially the saints. “[She] is that ‘great’ city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” But she’s not really great. She’s persecuted the saints, she’s murdered the saints, and she’s deceived the kings, and the peoples and the whole earth, to make them drunk with the wine of her fornication. She is absolutely, positively of the world and against God and His people. A messenger from heaven tells us to “*Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*”

Thank God – He offers us a chance of redemption. And He offers it to them, yet they refuse. For those who obey Him, God says “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (**Jeremiah 31:34**) Thanks be to God. God says be **separate**, be *holy* – for you are living in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Golden Cup

This cup looks so beautiful on the outside, but inside it absolutely filthy! A bit like the cup of the Pharisees, who wash the outside, and forget the inside. This cup is sin and she uses it to deceive the nations. I think about Indiana Jones. *It’s the cup that brings death.*

The Millstone

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!” So sure is Babylon’s fall – it is announced before it even happens (see **Isaiah 21**). God’s already said it would happen – that’s the power of God’s Word. And when she falls, she falls from such a height. In one hour she is made **desolate**.

Jeremiah 51:60-64

So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, then you shall say, ‘O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.’ Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, *that* you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. Then you shall say, “Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.”

Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

Revelation 18:21

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

Babylon is judged because she deceived all the nations by her sorcery, and in her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints.

When Paul is converted, Jesus says to him “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*” The Church is Christ’s possession. He is one with His Church. If you mess with His people, you mess with Him.

When God’s people are persecuted, He takes it personally.

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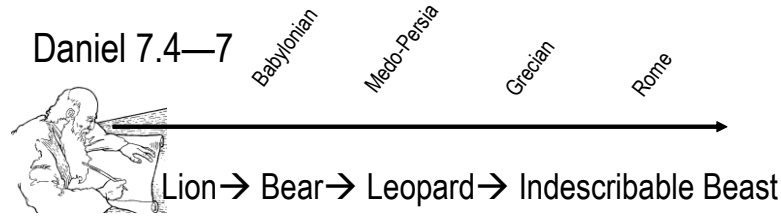
If you have questions or need anything at all, please feel free to contact me anytime.

If you don’t have a church family to call home, I hope you’ll come with us.

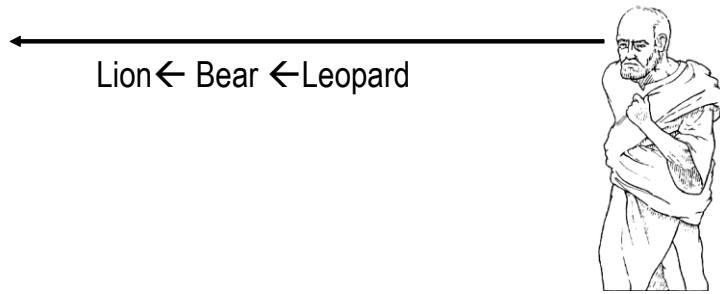
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EXTRA

Here's some sweet and accurate illustrations that might help you. I snatched these from Bill Haywood in Abingdon, VA. We're looking at **Daniel 7** in comparison to **Revelation 13** and **Revelation 17**.



Revelation 13.2



Nero and **Domitian** were the worst persecutors of the early church. **Domitian** was **Vespasian's** son and **Titus' brother**. He tried to take power right after **Nero**, and there is speculation that he actually had the three upstart generals (who are not included in the seven/eight) assassinated, but then he had to wait for his time after daddy and brother.

Rome didn't fall off the place of the planet after his reign. It's still there. So is Babylon. In fact, the actual Roman Empire didn't end, it went on a couple hundred years. But the evil against the saints had been judged, and this marked the beginning of the end for that Empire. Corruption had worked its way into the city and into the Empire, and as a result, the whole thing came toppling down.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Augustus: 27 BC-AD 14. 2. Tiberius: 14-37 AD. 3. Caligula: 37-41 AD. 4. Claudius: 41-54 AD. 5. Nero: 54-68 AD. 6. <u>Otho</u> 7. <u>Galba</u> 8. <u>Vitellius</u> 9. Vespasian: 69-79 AD. 10. Titus: 79-81 AD. 11. Domitian: 81-96 AD. 	<p>Daniel 7.24</p> <p>The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them. He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings.</p>
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