

BABYLON THE HARLOT

Revelation 17

This chapter is a symbolic retelling of how Babylon was the birthplace of sin and idolatry. Babylon was the first Gentile kingdom to conquer the nation of Israel and is the city of Satan and the Antichrist. Just as Jerusalem is the city of God, the capital of His people, representing His redemption, Babylon encapsulates Satan and all evil.

Here Babylon is pictured as a harlot, a counterfeit bride symbolic of idolatry and false religions, enticing and deceiving world leaders across time. Although the imagery of a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns may be familiar from Rev 12, the interpretation of these symbols as given to John is different. Here the 7 heads represent a succession of kings through history, past, present and future to John's day, culminating in the rise of the Antichrist and the 10 kings at the start of Tribulation.

Through the age of the Gentiles, rulers fornicate with the harlot, as kingdoms embrace false religions. However, the Antichrist demands worship only be given to him, as he assumes the role of God from the mid-Tribulation period. He therefore puts an end to all world religions, destroying religious Babylon. Just as a prostitute is used for temporary gratification, this harlot is cast aside by the one who had set her up thousands of years earlier.

THE BEAST

The beast we see here in Rev 17 is the same beast from Rev 13 which incorporated aspects of all four of Daniel's beasts. It had parts of a leopard, bear, lion and ten horns. So this beast represents the entire age of the gentiles, culminating with the Antichrist's rule of the world.

10 HORNS

These are symbolic of the 10 kings mentioned in Daniel 7:24 who will rule the world at the start of the Tribulation period.

THE HARLOT

The prostitute represents spiritual Babylon, the institutions of false religions and idolatry that Satan established over the centuries.

7 HEADS

The heads of the beast are supreme world leaders who ruled during the four kingdoms in Daniel's Age of the Gentiles. The criteria for determining which kings the 7 heads represent is the same as that of Daniel's beast - they must conquer both Babylon and Jerusalem.

Verse 10 mentions that 5 of these kings had already come and gone by John's time, one was currently ruling, and the final king was still to come. The only rulers that meet this criteria in history are shown below, along with the creatures from Daniel's vision that represented them.

From this vision in Dan 7, we know that the Babylonian Empire was depicted as a winged lion. The Persian Empire was a bear and the Greek Empire was represented as a winged leopard, indicative of the speed with which it conquered the known world.

The final beast in Daniel's Age of the Gentiles had teeth of iron and ten horns and represents a period that began with the Roman empire, extending through today and into the rise of the Antichrist.

In Verse 8, an angel tells John, "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up..." This phrase refers to the Antichrist's death and resurrection.





1

NEBUCHADNEZZAR


Babylonian
600BC



2

CYRUS

Persian
550BC



3

ALEXANDER

Greek
330BC



4

PTOLEMY III

Ptolemaic
246BC



5

ANTIOCHUS

Seleucid
170BC



6

TITUS

Roman
70AD



7

ANTICHRIST

Rev 17:1, in reference to the 7 heads, "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".

"5 HAVE FALLEN"
before John's time

"ONE IS"
ruling during John's time

"NOT YET COME"
He rules "a little while" - 3.5 years