

## REVELATION: CHAPTER 17

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**Rev 17:1** And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

- The great whore that sitteth- is old Jerusalem as compared to New Jerusalem, the virgin bride of Christ (21:2).

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- upon many waters- (v. 15- see notes 8:10-11) **Act 2:5, 8-11**. Jerusalem was the focus of the Israelite religion: 1 Kin 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:34-39; Dan 6:10.

“In reality, Jerusalem was the capital of an empire within an empire, and did indeed sit upon many waters.”- Arthur Ogden- pg. 327

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**Rev 17:2** With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

- The puppet kings (*satellite nations under Rome*) of Palestine, along with their subjects, committed fornication with (*i.e., were in allegiance with*) Jerusalem as they became dependent on each other (18:9-10) all the while aiding her as she persecuted the saints: Read Eze 23.

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- The wine is the blood of the saints. Jerusalem did not recognize Christianity since she did not recognize Jesus as her Messiah (*Jn 15:20*). The nations had a choice.

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**Rev 17:3** So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

- in the Spirit- definite article “the” as in 1:10. This physical city had to be understood from the state of her spiritual significance (*Jer 23:14*) thus Holy Spirit was employed for John’s understanding as to who she was.  
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- wilderness- place of safety from where John can view the scene of destruction (*12:6, 14*).  
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- woman- city of Jerusalem.  
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- sit- enthroned.

“This is the city, **Babylon the Great**, which exercised dominion over the kings of the earth as she was carried by the Roman Empire and seen by John destroyed in the Apocalypse. (Rev 17) She was the faithful city that turned harlot (*Isa 1:21*).” - Arthur Ogden- Pg. 49  
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- scarlet- covered in sin (*Isa 1:18*).  
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- beast- (*v. 8; 13:1*) Rome represented by the Caesars.  
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- names of blasphemy- even if only by a small token of recognition, Jerusalem tolerated emperor deification since she prostituted herself on Rome’s wealth.  
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- seven heads and ten horns- See vs. 9-12!  
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**Rev 17:4** And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

- purple and scarlet- (*Jer 4:30*) royal colors and apparel (*Lk 16:19*). She is a royal whore!  
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- gold and precious stones and pearls- vain trappings of the rich and wanton: *Mat 6:24*.  
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- cup- upon seeing the success the Jews enjoyed under aligning themselves with the Roman Empire's tyranny against Christians, the satellite nations wanted to drink of it also. They shared in their abominations by taking part in the persecution of the church.

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- filthiness of her fornication- Jerusalem participated in the rites and ceremonies that accompanied vain worship (*Mk 7:7; 2 Cor 6:14-18*) along with the traffic and commerce which was behind her wealth and vanity.

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**Rev 17:5** And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

- upon her forehead was a name written-(*Jer 3:1-3*) ownership (*14:1*), or occupation.

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- MYSTERY- not so much as to conceal her true identity but to make her synonymous with Babylon (*16:19*), the now idolatrous city that was once righteous (*Isa 1:21*). She became madam of the bordello in Palestine which was in bed with the Roman Empire.

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**Rev 17:6** And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

- drunken- intoxicated. Overindulged with the fruit of her terror: *Jer 51:6-10*.

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- blood of the saints- Old Testament martyrs (*6:9-10*); blood of the martyrs of Jesus- New Testament (*9:11*). Jerusalem was involved in the persecution of the righteous concerning both testaments: *Mat 23:35; Act 7:52-53, 58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 12:1-4; 22:4-5; 26:9-11*.

**G3144** - μάρτυς - martus - mar'-toos

Of uncertain affinity; a **witness** (literally [judicially] or figuratively [generally]); by analogy a “martyr”: - **martyr**, record, witness. (*Emp. added*) (2:13; 11:3)

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- John was astonished.

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**Rev 17:7** And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

- The angel begins to explain the vision as though John should not have been astonished.

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**Rev 17:8** The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

- beast- Rome, represented by the Caesars.

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- was- Nero committed suicide (*June 9, 68 AD*) and Vespasian, who was general of the Roman army tasked with the siege, returned to Rome to become Emperor after Galba, Otho and Vitellius proved inept for the task.

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- is not- Between 68-69 AD Galba (*6/68 -1/69 AD*), Otho (*1/15-4/16/69 AD*) and Vitellius (*4/19-12/20/69 AD*) assumed the throne in Rome. During this time frame there was no real stability and thus no real Emperor. It was known as the “Year of the Four Emperors”.  
*Wikipedia*

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- shall ascend- the final siege resumed under Vespasian’s son, Titus.

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- out of the bottomless pit- the source of evil influence, the stronghold of Satan (9:2). It is from this place that the civil war within the city was influenced (9:4). See notes 20:1-3.

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- go into perdition- speaking of the “beast”; Domitian (81-96 AD) was the Emperor who brought about the end of the Flavian Dynasty (*Vespasian, Titus and Domitian*) by his own assignation in 96 AD.

**G684** - ἀπώλεια - apōleia - ap-o'-li-a

From a presumed derivative of G622; **ruin** or *loss* (physical, spiritual or eternal): - damnable (-nation), destruction, die, perdition, X perish, pernicious ways, waste. (*Emp. added*)

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- Past, present and yet future to John: Nero’s death, Vespasian’s ascension to the throne and Titus becoming General in charge of the siege. The pagan peoples of Rome were amazed at Rome’s action, lull and resumption in the siege against Jerusalem along with the persecution of the church. (13:3)

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**Rev 17:9** And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

**Rev 17:10** And there are (Gk.1525- they are) seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

**Rev 17:11** And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Tradition holds that Romulus and Remus founded the original city on the Palatine Hill on April 21, 753 BC, and that the seven hills were first occupied by small settlements that were not grouped. The seven hills' denizens began to interact, which began to bond the groups. The city of Rome, thus, came into being as

these separate settlements acted as a group, draining the marshy valleys between them and turning them into markets (*fora* in Latin). Later, in the early 4th century BC, the Servian Walls were constructed to protect the seven hills.

*Wikipedia*

- seven heads (of the beast [Rome] are) seven mountains (kingdoms ruled by) seven kings (Caesars); not reigning concurrent. The following is a further in-depth explanation of the preceding verses.

### **Daniel 7**

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| 1. Augustus (27 BC-14 AD) ( <i>Lk 2:1- Augustus later became a title- Acts 25:21, 25; 27:1</i> ) | These are the five that <u>are fallen</u> .                                  |
| 2. Tiberius (14-37 AD) ( <i>29 AD- Lk 3:1</i> )  | (17:10- past)  |
| 3. Caligula (37-41 AD)   | (Galba through Titus adds up to the number 10 of                             |
| 4. Claudius (41-54 AD) ( <i>Acts 11:28; 18:2; 23:26</i> )  | Daniel's vision with Domitian being the other that rose after them.) Dan 7:7 |
| 5. Nero (54-68 AD)   |  |

### **Revelation**

These are not counted here because of the shortness of their combined reign of about 5 months. (*Dan 7:8, 24*)

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6. Galba                       |                                     |
| 7. Otho                        |                                     |
| 8. Vitellius                   |                                     |
|                                | (68-69 AD)                          |
| 6. Vespasian (69-79 AD) (13:3) | 6. Vespasian- <u>is</u> (presently, |

*Caesar at the  
time of the  
siege.)*

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|-------------------------|--|
| 7. Titus* (79-81 AD)    | 7. Titus- <u>not yet</u> , will abide a short time.  |
| 8. Domitian* (81-96 AD) | 8. Domitian-the eighth, of the seven ( <i>like those before him</i> ) goes into final ruin**. ( <i>Dan 7:8, 11</i> ) |

Julius Caesar, from whom the title originated, “rose to become one of the most powerful politicians in the Roman Republic”. This is why he wasn’t mentioned as the first Caesar over the Roman Empire. His “great-nephew and adopted heir Octavian, later known as Augustus, rose to sole power after defeating his opponents” and once “solidifying his power ... the era of the Roman Empire began”. *Wikipedia- Julius Caesar*. \*Titus and Domitian were sons of Vespasian (*the Flavian Dynasty- made up of “Italian gentry”*). Titus, after a short reign, died of a fatal fever (81 AD) and was replaced by his brother Domitian.

\*\*Domitian (*going into perdition*) “eventually succumbed to paranoia and engaged in a vicious round of executions that led to his own assignation in 96 AD.”-metmuseum.org

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**Rev 17:12** And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

- ten horns- Gk.2768- Thayer: “Since animals (esp. bulls) defend themselves with their horns, the horn of the

Hebrews (and other nations) is a symbol of strength and courage, and is used as such in a variety of phrases.” In this verse (*and in 13:1*) they are the toes of the feet in Daniel’s vision: Dan 2:42-43.

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- ten kings- Since toes are what stabilize the feet, this is where Rome received her stability, from the combined power she received via the client puppet kings under her (*such as the Herods*).

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- Having received no kingdom as yet they were not in total control of the Roman government and had no say in her affairs.

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- As long as they were subordinate to Roman rule, they receive power as kings meaning, they only had authority over their home country. They were “client” kings; puppets.

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- Having that authority was at the discretion of Caesar. Only lasting one hour gives the impression that it was short lived.

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**Rev 17:13** These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

- It was the total sum of the satellite nations that gave the Caesars their power (*13:4*). In return they received protection, infrastructure and civil government from Rome (*like bully protection where a bully is paid in order for him to not torment or allow others to*).

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**Rev 17:14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

- These- the subordinates of Rome. They carried out Rome’s policy of zero tolerance toward the Christian

faith. Christ overcame Satan at the resurrection (*Gen 3:15*) and thus defeated any who allowed themselves to be under Satan's control. Even if it meant martyrdom, those who chose to fight on the Lamb's side (*called- 2 Thes 2:14; chosen; Eph 1:4; faithful- Rev 2:10*) won the victory (*Mat 25:45*). The persecution of the church "pruned away the weak branches and left the church stronger". Eldred Echols

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**Rev 17:15** And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

- As one of the world's leading commercial powers Jerusalem had control, not only over the puppet kings of these nations where Jews lived but, also over the commerce they produced. Ruling over these waters indicates the influence that the city of Jerusalem had over even the Gentile satellite nations (*18:3, 9, 11ff*).

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**Rev 17:16** And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

- The puppet kings of the Empire focused on Jerusalem since she was given special privileges where worship was concerned. She was exposed (*naked*) for what she truly was (*selfish, vain*), cut off (*desolate*), they [*ate*] her flesh (*the satellite nations turned on her*) and [*burned*] her with fire (*destroyed Jerusalem according to the will of God*). Even the beast (*Caesar*) reviled Jerusalem (*the whore*) since it could no longer control her because of the rebellious factions from within.

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**Rev 17:17** For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

- Just as God hardened Pharaoh's heart (*Ex 9:16*) the Empire here is used to do His will (*Dan 2:41-44; 5:21*).

The satellite nations supported the Empire by their allegiance to the persecution of God's people, here, spiritual Israel, the church. His will here had to do with His expansion of the kingdom, the church (*Acts 8:1, 4*): *Ex 9:16*; *Dan 5:21*; *Act 8:1, 4*; *2 Pet 3:9*.

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**Rev 17:18** And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

- The woman is Jerusalem, that great city. (*11:8*) The kings of the earth were those satellite sovereigns who were jealous of her special place within the Empire.

### Worksheet Revelation: Chapter 17

1. When "one of the angels who had the seven bowls" came to John, what did he show him? (*v. 1*)
2. What did "the dwellers of the earth... become drunk" with? (*v. 2*)
3. Who was "sitting on a scarlet beast" and how many "heads" and "horns" did it have? (*v. 3*)
4. The "golden cup" that was "in her hand" was "full of" what? (*v. 4*)
5. "On her forehead was written" what and what was she "drunk with"? (*vs. 5, 6*)
6. Explain "the beast" and why he "was, and is not, and is about to rise" from where to go where? (*v. 8*)
7. Explain "the seven heads" of the beast upon "which the woman is seated". Also, the "ten horns" it had. (*vs. 9-12*)
8. What did "the ten horns" "hand over" to the beast? (*v. 13*)
9. What were "the waters" John saw "where the prostitute is seated"? (*v. 15*)
10. What did "the ten horns... and the beast" do to "the prostitute"? Why? Who was she? (*v. 16*)