



# Revelation 17: The Great Prostitute and the Beast

Revelation 17, the last book of the Bible, presents a potent and prophetic vision of the end times. The chapter focuses on the "Great Prostitute" and the beast she rides, symbolizing the fall of a corrupt and ungodly system. In verse 1, the "Great Prostitute" is introduced as a woman adorned in purple and scarlet, sitting upon a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Verse 2 reveals this woman to be "Babylon the Great," a city that represents the world's empires that oppose God. The woman and the beast, further explored in verse 3, represent a corrupt system that seduces the world with its power and wealth. Verse 4 highlights the woman's luxurious lifestyle, described as "clothed in purple and scarlet," representing her wealth and influence. Her name, revealed in verse 5, is "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth." Verse 6 points to the woman's involvement in the persecution of God's people, highlighting her role in the martyrdom of believers. Finally, verse 7 reveals the mystery of the woman and the beast, revealing the true nature of this corrupt system and its ultimate downfall. This chapter offers profound spiritual insights into the spiritual forces at work in the world and the ultimate victory of God's kingdom.



by **janice wright**





# Verse 1: The Great Prostitute

## The Vision of the Great Prostitute

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters." (Revelation 17:1)

## The Significance of the "Many Waters"

The "many waters" likely represent the vast influence and reach of this corrupt and seductive system, which has enticed and ensnared people from all over the world. This could be understood as a symbol of the global reach of empires, political systems, or even ideologies that oppose God's will. Imagine, for example, the Roman Empire's sprawling influence, the widespread allure of ancient paganism, or the global reach of modern secularism, all of which could be seen as examples of "many waters" in this context.

## The Prostitute's Power and Influence

The Great Prostitute is described as a powerful and alluring figure, wielding significant influence over the nations and peoples of the world. Her power stems from her seductive nature, which draws people in with promises of wealth, pleasure, and worldly success. The text paints a vivid picture of a system that uses its influence to manipulate and control, ultimately leading people astray from God's path.





# Verse 2: Babylon the Great

1

## Babylon the Great

This phrase identifies the Great Prostitute as a powerful and corrupt system that has seduced nations and individuals into spiritual unfaithfulness. It signifies a departure from true worship and allegiance to God.

2

## Spiritual Adultery

The "wine of her adulteries" represents the intoxicating influence of this system that leads people astray from God's truth and righteousness. It alludes to the seductive allure of worldly power, wealth, and pleasure, which often leads to moral and spiritual compromise.

3

## Global Influence

The involvement of "kings of the earth" and "inhabitants of the earth" demonstrates the pervasive influence of this corrupt system, which extends its reach across the globe. It signifies the way in which political and religious authorities have been drawn into its orbit, participating in its seductive practices and furthering its agenda.

# Verse 3: The Woman and the Beast



## The Woman on the Beast

This verse introduces the imagery of the Great Prostitute riding a beast, symbolizing a powerful and corrupt system being empowered by a demonic force. The woman, representing the seductive and corrupt system, is depicted as sitting astride the beast, signifying her dependence on and control by this demonic entity.



## The Symbolic Meaning

The seven heads and ten horns of the beast represent the beast's immense authority and influence. These numbers are significant in biblical numerology, often associated with completeness and power. The seven heads could symbolize different empires or periods of this corrupt system, while the ten horns could represent its global dominion.



## The Wilderness Setting

The wilderness setting, where the vision unfolds, symbolizes a spiritually barren and desolate environment. This context suggests that this corrupt system has taken root and flourished in places where spiritual truth has been abandoned or ignored. The wilderness represents a spiritual wasteland where true faith is absent.



# Verse 4: The Woman's Luxury

1

## The Woman's Attire

The description of the woman's attire, "purple and scarlet, glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls," evokes a sense of extravagance and opulence. This imagery reflects the allure of wealth and power that this system exudes, enticing nations and individuals to embrace its seductive influence.

2

## The Golden Cup

The "golden cup" in her hand, filled with "abominable things and the filth of her adulteries," symbolizes the corrupting nature of this system. It represents the intoxicating influence of worldly pleasures, power, and wealth that leads to moral and spiritual decay.

3

## Outward Opulence, Inward Corruption

The stark contrast between the woman's outward opulence and her inner corruption highlights the deceptive nature of the system. It suggests that true spiritual fulfillment cannot be found in the pursuit of worldly riches and power. The woman's outward display is a facade, hiding the darkness and emptiness that lie within.





# Verse 5: The Woman's Name



## The Woman's Name

The name written on her forehead is "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth." (Revelation 17:5). This cryptic title reveals the true nature of the corrupt system represented by the woman. It symbolizes the culmination of centuries of spiritual apostasy and rebellion against God.



## Babylon the Great

The term "Babylon the Great" alludes to the ancient city of Babylon, infamous for its idolatry, immorality, and political dominance. It serves as a powerful symbol for any system that mirrors its characteristics, embracing worldly power and pleasure over true spiritual devotion.



## The Mother of Prostitutes

The phrase "Mother of Prostitutes" underscores the pervasive spiritual infidelity and moral corruption associated with this system. This system spreads its corrupting influence across the globe, enticing nations and individuals to embrace its seductive allure, leading them away from God's truth and righteousness.





# Verse 6: The Woman and the Martyrs

1

## The Woman's Intoxication

The verse states, "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." (Revelation 17:6). This graphic imagery reveals the woman's deep involvement in the persecution and even murder of those who have been faithful to Jesus. The use of the word "drunk" emphasizes the extent of her depravity and her unquenchable thirst for power, even if it means sacrificing human life.

2

## The Martyrs' Witness

The martyrs' witness, described as "bearing testimony to Jesus," is a powerful act of defiance against the corrupt system represented by the woman. They remain steadfast in their faith, refusing to compromise their beliefs for the sake of worldly gain or power. The woman's desire to silence these witnesses through persecution underscores her hatred for truth and her fear of losing control.

3

## The Contrast

The stark contrast between the woman's outward opulence, depicted in the previous verse as being adorned with "purple and scarlet, glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls," and the suffering and sacrifice of the martyrs highlights the system's true nature. It reveals a spiritual wickedness that thrives on the suffering of others, using their blood to maintain its power and influence.





# Verse 7: The Mystery Explained

The angel's explanation unveils the true nature of the "woman" and the "beast" she rides, providing insight into the corrupt system that has its roots in the ancient city of Babylon. This system, referred to as "Babylon the Great," is known for its idolatry and immorality, mirroring the characteristics of the ancient city. It is characterized by an outward display of wealth and power, masking the underlying spiritual corruption and moral decay within its ranks. This "woman" embodies a powerful, corrupt, and influential system that has its roots in the ancient city of Babylon, known for its idolatry and immorality.

The "beast" represents a political force that empowers and supports this corrupt system, enabling it to spread its influence and control over the world. This political force, symbolized by the "seven heads" and "ten horns," represents the various political powers that have historically and currently served this corrupt system. These political powers contribute to the woman's influence and enable her to persecute God's people, those who have been faithful to Jesus and who bear testimony to His truth.

The angel's words provide a critical key for unlocking the deeper spiritual significance of the vision. It underscores the ongoing struggle between the forces of good and evil, as God's ultimate plan for redemption and the triumph of his kingdom are unveiled throughout the book of Revelation. The corrupt system, symbolized by the "woman" and the "beast," poses a significant threat to God's people, who have been persecuted and even martyred for their faith. This passage sets the stage for a continued exploration of the battle between these opposing forces, culminating in the ultimate victory of God's righteous kingdom.



# Symbolic Interpretations



## The Woman and the Beast

The woman represents a powerful, corrupt, and influential system that has its roots in the ancient city of Babylon. This system is characterized by an outward display of wealth and power, masking the underlying spiritual corruption and moral decay within its ranks. It is also known for its idolatry and immorality, mirroring the characteristics of the ancient city. The "beast" represents a political force that empowers and supports this corrupt system, enabling it to spread its influence and control over the world. This political force, symbolized by the "seven heads" and "ten horns," represents the various political powers that have historically and currently served this corrupt system.



## Heads and Horns

These represent the various political powers that have historically and currently served this corrupt system. These political powers contribute to the woman's influence and enable her to persecute God's people, those who have been faithful to Jesus and who bear testimony to His truth. Examples of these political powers include the Roman Empire, the Papacy, and other empires throughout history.



## The Martyrs' Witness

The woman's "drunkenness" with the blood of the martyrs highlights the true nature of the system's spiritual wickedness and persecution of the faithful, like those who were persecuted for their faith in Jesus. This suffering and sacrifice of the martyrs reveals a spiritual wickedness that thrives on the suffering of others, using their blood to maintain its power and influence.

# Modern Interpretations



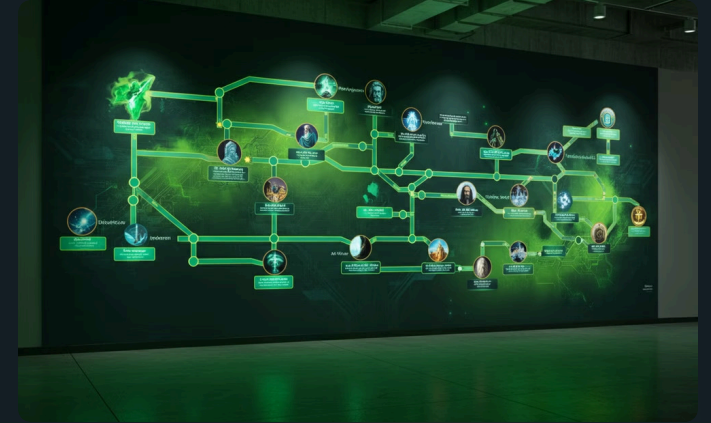
## Scholarly Debate

Modern scholars and theologians continue to analyze and interpret the symbolic meanings within the book of Revelation, sparking lively discussions and debates. Some scholars argue that the "woman" represents the Roman Catholic Church, while others see her as a symbol of any corrupt political or religious power that opposes God's kingdom. Specifically, this debate centers around the question of whether the "woman" represents a specific institution, such as the Roman Catholic Church, or a broader, symbolic representation of any oppressive power structure. The debate highlights the ongoing challenge of interpreting the book's complex symbolism in a way that resonates with contemporary realities, seeking to understand the message of Revelation in light of our current world.



## Symbolic Representations

The "woman" and "beast" are often interpreted as representing corrupt political and religious powers that oppose God's kingdom. For instance, the "woman" may symbolize a system that relies on wealth, power, and control, often manifested in institutions like oppressive governments or corrupt religious authorities. These interpretations underscore the inherent conflict between the corrupt forces of the world and God's righteous kingdom, as depicted in Revelation.



## Historical Perspectives

Scholars explore how the visions in Revelation may have been influenced by or connected to specific historical events and figures throughout the centuries. The "seven heads" and "ten horns" are often interpreted as representing various political empires, including the Roman Empire and the Papacy, that have historically served the corrupt system symbolized by the "woman." By analyzing the historical context, scholars seek to understand how the visions in Revelation reflect the challenges and conflicts faced by the early church, and how these visions can be applied to contemporary situations of persecution and oppression.



# Biblical Symbolism



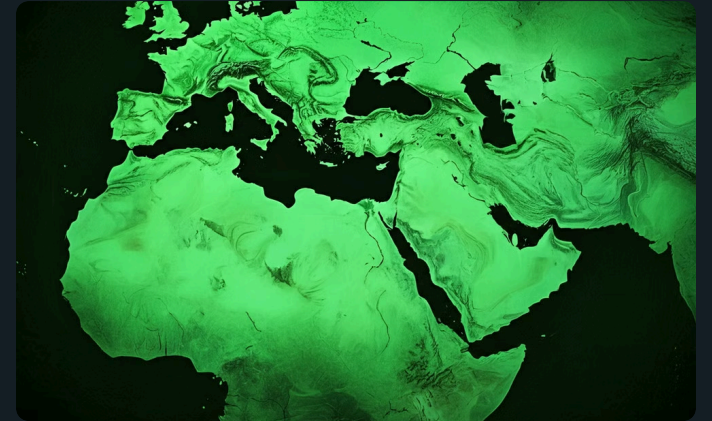
## Symbolic Representations

The "woman" in Revelation 17 represents a powerful, corrupt system rooted in Babylon, symbolizing idolatry, immorality, and a rejection of God's authority. This system can be seen as a manifestation of the "great harlot" described earlier in Revelation, who has seduced the nations of the world into her ways of sin and rebellion. The "beast" is a political power that supports this system, often representing empires like the Roman Empire that historically upheld a corrupt order that opposed God's rule. These empires provide power and authority to the "woman," enabling her to spread her influence and dominate the nations. The "beast" can also represent a specific political entity or a more generalized representation of any powerful force that seeks to suppress the true faith and replace God's kingdom with its own agenda.



## Heavenly Visions

The visions of angels and demonic forces in Revelation 17 depict a cosmic struggle between good and evil. These heavenly beings are deeply involved in the unfolding events of the book, reflecting the spiritual nature of the conflict between God's kingdom and the forces of darkness.



## Historical Connections

The references to Babylon, a city notorious for its idolatry and moral decay, suggest that Revelation's symbolism is rooted in specific historical contexts. The "seven heads" of the beast, representing the various political powers throughout history, connect the imagery of Revelation 17 to the rise and fall of empires, particularly the Roman Empire and its influence on the ancient world.

# Ancient Prostitutes



## Shameless Seductresses

In ancient Mesopotamia, prostitution was deeply intertwined with religious practices. Temple priestesses, known as "sacred prostitutes," offered their bodies as a form of worship to deities. These women held considerable power, influencing political decisions and shaping social norms through their sexual influence. Their lives were often shrouded in secrecy and taboo, reflecting the complex relationship between sexuality, religion, and power in ancient Mesopotamian society.



## Cultured Companions

In contrast to the sacred prostitutes of Mesopotamia, ancient Greece saw the rise of hetairai, highly educated courtesans who were valued for their intellectual companionship. These women were not merely sexual objects but were celebrated for their wit, eloquence, and ability to engage in philosophical discourse with wealthy patrons. Their presence in society challenged traditional gender roles and elevated the status of women through their intellectual prowess.



## Indulgent Indecency

The Roman Empire witnessed a flourishing of prostitution, where women gained immense wealth and power through their seductive influence. These prostitutes were often connected to political elites, using their charm and connections to manipulate decisions and shape the course of events. The Roman Empire's tolerance for prostitution, and the prominence of these powerful women, reflects the complex interplay between social norms, political power, and the allure of forbidden pleasures.



# Future Events



## The End Times

Revelation describes a climactic final judgment, where the earth is engulfed in fire and the forces of evil are unleashed. This echoes the historical context of Babylon, a city known for its idolatry and moral decay. The "seven heads" of the beast, representing various political powers throughout history, connect the imagery to the rise and fall of empires, especially the Roman Empire. This final judgment is a powerful reminder of God's justice and his unwavering commitment to righting the wrongs that plague the world. It serves as a warning to those who reject his authority and embrace the darkness, while offering hope to those who remain faithful.



## New Creation

After the destruction of the old world, a new and glorious kingdom of God will be established. This celestial city represents a realm of righteousness and peace, where the struggles of the previous world are overcome. This vision of a new creation echoes the themes of restoration and renewal found throughout the Bible. It speaks of a future where sin, suffering, and death are banished, replaced by a world filled with joy, harmony, and eternal life. The promise of a new creation is a source of profound hope for believers, a reminder that God's ultimate plan is not destruction but restoration and renewal.



## Second Coming

Revelation predicts the triumphant return of Christ, who will vanquish evil and establish a new era of divine rule. This event, known as the Second Coming, serves as a powerful reminder of God's ultimate victory over darkness and his promise of a restored world. It is a moment of both judgment and redemption, where Christ will judge the living and the dead, rewarding the faithful and condemning the unrepentant. The Second Coming is a central theme in Christian belief, offering hope and assurance of God's final triumph over all evil.