

## Revelation Chapter 17

In this chapter we will look at “Babylon the Great”, the Great Harlot/the Great Whore. Much has been written about her identity.<sup>1</sup> We will concentrate on what our Orthodox Church has written, and not get side-traced in fanciful speculation.

**Revelation 17:1-11, KJV [Constantinople 1904 text corrections]** *1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven ~~vials~~ [bowls], 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: 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. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 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~~ [the unclean things] of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 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. 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. 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~~ [whose name hath not been 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~~ [and shall come]. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

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1. The two most expansive Orthodox commentaries on this are: Vladimir Moss, *Apocalypse The Book of the End*, 2007, pp. 234-260, at [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/174\\_APOCALYPSE\\_THE\\_BOOK\\_OF\\_THE\\_END.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/174_APOCALYPSE_THE_BOOK_OF_THE_END.pdf), and Archimandrite Athanasios Mitilinaios, *Revelation, The Seven Angels, Orthodox Christian Lessons*, Vol. IV, Zoe Press, Dunlop, CA 2017, pp. 141-200. St. Hippolytus of Rome also wrote *A Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, available in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5.

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

First, let's note that the whore is sitting upon many waters. What do those waters symbolize. The angel will later tell St. John, *The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.* -- like the restless waters of the oceans, always being tossed to and fro by different winds and currents, i.e., cultural, moral, political, and spiritual winds and currents -- ungodly currents that confuse and mislead the *multitudes*, making them loose direction, driving them off course, i.e., turning them away from their Creator and the worship of Him, then filling their spiritual void with worldly pursuits or the worship of demons.

Now to the great whore -- one with whom the *kings of the earth have committed fornication*: The word *fornication* in Scripture is used to describe the actions of those people, cities, and nations who have apostatized, who have turned away from the Living God, and worship creation as a whole or the creatures who inhabit it, i.e., Satan, demons, animals like snakes, dragons, bulls, or themselves -- in short, idols, i.e., they worship creation rather than the Creator Who is blessed forever. In worshipping these idols/creation, they have become drunk on sin, inebriated, dulled in their thinking, impaired/darkened in their behavior, and uninhibited in their passions. They have become like beasts living to fulfill their fleshly passions.

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

St. John was carried away into the wilderness -- usually the haunt/home of demons where he saw a woman, presumably the same great harlot, but now sitting upon a *scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.* Who or what is this scarlet coloured beast? In ***Revelation 12:3*** in a previous vision St. John saw *a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads* who was identified as Satan. So she rests upon Satan, relies upon Satan.

St. Andrew of Caesarea writes: "She was seated on a scarlet beast because through evil deeds she reposes on the devil, who is murderous and delights in blood. Through such evil deeds she becomes a coworker with the apostate [the Antichrist] in his blasphemies against god. The beast with its scarlet appearance is an indication of its cruelty and savagery and murderous intent."

***Revelation 17: 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and***

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*decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and [the unclean things] of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

The woman has been interpreted as being the Roman Catholic Church, as Jerusalem, as the earthly kingdom, as the church which is unfaithful to Christ (the modern Ecumenist Church), or as being the ruling city at the time of the coming of the Antichrist. The woman is portrayed wearing the purple and scarlet robes of royalty, i.e., she is dressed lavishly as a queen with all her riches, jewels, and pearls which are symbols of her dominion and rule over all she seduces and intoxicates with her wine.

St. Andrew of Caesarea: “The cup [in her hand] indicates the sweetness of evil deeds before they are tasted, and it is gold because such deeds seem precious. Moreover the cup [being full] demonstrates that she is not sated by her evil, but pursues further evil with a thirst for her own destruction.”

Archbishop Averky, viewing the woman as the apostate church writes: The members of this church ... “being filled with outward piety and at the same time not foreign to feelings of a crude love of honors, and a vainglorious love of fame, the members of the unfaithful church will love luxury and comfort, and will begin to arrange luxurious ceremonies for the powerful of the world and to attain holy aims by sinful means and they will preach exclusively by the sword and gold” (N. Vinogradov).

“A more general commentary is inclined to see in this harlot --who bears the name Babylon -- the whole crudely sensual and anti-Christian culture of mankind in the last times in general, for which is prepared a frightful universal catastrophe at the end of the world at the Second Coming of Christ. The fall of this ‘Babylon’ is presented in the Apocalypse as the first act of victory in the worldwide battle of the Church of Christ with the sinful kingdom of the devil.”

In agreement with her being an apostate church, some have likened her clothing with her *gold and precious stones and pearls* as reminiscent of the clothing of the High Priest of Israel. The High Priest of Israel had precious stones on his chest and shoulders. Furthermore, on his forehead there was a golden plate affixed to his miter/turban which read ***Holiness To The Lord***. Here the harlot wears on her forehead *Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth*.

Some see the harlot, and St. John’s wonderment over her as being the apostate New Calendar/Ecumenist Orthodox Church united with all the false religions of the world!

So we might summarize these ideas that just as the Most Holy Theotokos is the Queen of Heaven and the Church, the Bride of Christ, here we see the woman as the high priestess of Satan’s earthly ecumenical kingdom and church who communes her followers on



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the blood of the saints and other abominations. If we look at the Papal ecumenical prayer gatherings at Assisi, first brought to my attention by Fr. Alexi Young's videos of the events, in which every year for the past 32 years gather Roman Catholics, Jacobites, Nestorians, Monophysites (Copts), New Calendar/Ecumenist Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Bahai's, Wickans, Priestesses of Isis of Ancient Egypt, New Age priests and priestesses, pagan shamans of every tongue and tribe, all praying together for "world peace." Here, every biblical abomination has been given equal representation. Despite Rome's justification saying that they are holding up the Cross of Christ as the symbol of God's love for mankind and recognize whatever truths these other sects have in part, we see "Mystery Babylon the Great Whore, the Mother of Harlot and all the abominations of the earth" at work, mixing idolatry, paganism, and outright heretical christian sects with the ecumenist orthodox. Such a sight would surely cause St. John's jaw to drop in amazement and wonder. How could such a thing happen? Such a gatherings are surely devised and exploited by Satan for his war against the True Church and against mankind, mixing truth with lies, faith with demonic spiritualism.

In the last verse of this chapter, the woman is further described: *18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.* In St. John's day, that city would have been Rome! In the future, what will it be? -- Rome (the Vatican)? -- Brussels (the EU)? -- Mecca/Istanbul (Muslim caliphate)? Moscow? New York? Washington? -- or will it be a worldly and apostate Jerusalem with a restored Temple, Priestly caste, the Sanhedrin, until the Antichrist declares himself to be God and commands all to worship him?

***Revelation 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. 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.***

[Rather than being drunk with the Holy Spirit, here we see Satan's church, all those who oppose God and refuse to worship the Holy Trinity, *drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus* just like Rome of old.]

St. Andrew of Caesarea: ... when the Evangelist saw one of these cities polluted with the blood of the saints, he was perplexed and learned about it from the angel, namely, that she who bears the power of the earthly kingdom at the end of time must suffer for her trespasses.

Now, for the identity of the beast!

***Revelation 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***

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*name hath not been written] in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, [and shall come].*

St. Andrew of Caesarea: “The beast is the devil who is always seeking someone to devour. He was ‘killed’ by the Cross of Christ, but, it is said, he will live again at the end, effecting the denial of salvation through the deceit of the antichrist in signs and wonders. In this way he ‘was’ and was powerful before the cross, but he ‘no longer is’ after the salvation providing sufferings [of Christ], for he has become powerless and is deprived of his authority that he had over the nations on account of idolatry. At the end he will come, in the way we have indicated, arising from the abyss or from wherever he was condemned and where the demons, thrown out by Christ, begged him not to send them, but rather into the swine. Or he will come out of the present life, which is figuratively called “abyss” because of the depth of sin that lives in it and because it is blown about and agitated by the winds of passion. From this place the antichrist, having Satan in himself, will come for the destruction of people, going himself to perdition in the age to come ...

“On account of the false miracles, those whose names are not written in the book of those who live forever and who have not been sufficiently taught in the prophecies of Christ concerning him will be astonished as his coming and wonder how he had regained his ancient power.” [Note, while Christ was God incarnate, the Antichrist is not Satan incarnate, but a man fully energized by all the power of Satan, so he appears to be Satan by his powers and illusions.]

*10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*

Vladimir Moss “Rome is situated on seven hills. However, two other important cities are also situated on seven hills: Constantinople and Moscow. Thus the fact of being situated on seven hills mystically links Old Rome in Italy, the New Rome of Constantinople and the Third Rome of Moscow. But from 1917 the whore of false religion was seen sitting on each of these former champions of Christian Truth - Papism in Rome, Islam in Constantinople and Militant Atheism in Moscow, in fulfillment of the prophecy: *O how has the faithful city, Zion, once full of judgement, become an harlot! (Isaiah 1.21) – become Babylon!*”

“However, "mountain" in Holy Scripture can have the meaning of "kingdom", as in Daniel 2.35 and Jeremiah 51.25. Thus in saying that the seven heads are seven mountains, the Holy Spirit may be alluding to the interpretation that the heads are kingdoms, which interpretation follows explicitly in the next verse.”

St. Andrew of Caesarea considers them to be 7 world kingdoms: the Assyrians, the Medians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Macedonian Greeks, the Old Roman Empire, and the New Roman Empire, i.e., Constantinople.

These seven kings: five of which were fallen in St. John’s day, are considered to be

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seven ages by St. Hippolytus, seven world empires by St. Irenaeus, and the 7 most anti-Christian emperors of the Roman Empire by others. So there are many differing opinions.

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

Andrew of Caesarea: “This beast is the Antichrist. He is the eighth because he arises after the seven kingdoms for the deception and devastation of the earth. He is from the seven because he arises from one of these. For he will not come forth from a nation other than those mentioned before, but as a king of the Romans for the defeat and destruction of those who believed in him. And after this he will go into the destruction of Gehenna.”

Vladimir Moss: “The beast of antichristian political power, which has found partial incarnations in the first seven kingdoms, will find its complete and perfect incarnation in an eighth king, who is the beast himself (as opposed to one of his heads or horns). This eighth head or king, as we have argued, is the king of the Jews, the personal Antichrist. He will combine in himself all the evil of all the Pharaohs, Caesars and Commissars that preceded him. He is said to be of the seven “because he has made his appearance from one of these kingdoms” (Archbishop Averky). If the kingdom in question is Russia, the seventh head of the beast, then this accords with the prophecy of St. Seraphim that the Antichrist will be born in Russia. In other words, the Antichrist will be a Jew of the tribe of Dan, but born in Russia.”<sup>2</sup>

***Revelation 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.***

The Prophet Daniel, in addition to seeing in a vision the 4 worldly kingdoms portrayed as beasts, i.e.: Babylon as a lion with wings, Media & Persia as a devouring bear raised up on one side with ribs in its teeth, Macedonia/Greece as a leopard with 4 wings and 4 heads, and a 4th very powerful beast, [thought by many over the centuries to be Rome]. Daniel also had a subsequent vision of this fourth beast, this time with ten horns like in Revelation. This latter vision of Daniel complements and helps to interpret St. John’s vision.

***Daniel 7:19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them 22 until the Ancient of days [a title for the Lord Jesus Christ] came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23***

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2. Vladimir Moss, *Apocalypse The Book of the End*, 2007, p, 191, at [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/174\\_APOCALYPSE\\_THE\\_BOOK\\_OF\\_THE\\_END.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/174_APOCALYPSE_THE_BOOK_OF_THE_END.pdf).

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*Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [an expression for 3 1/2 years]. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

Here the Prophet Daniel helps us to see that the beast with the ten horns is the kingdom of the Antichrist who give rise to the Antichrist as its leader. “... *that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows ... [that] made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.*-- that is the Antichrist. Those horns/leaders will conspire together with the Antichrist to oppose Christ and the Church, as well as any heretical religion that stands between the Antichrist and his desire to declare himself “god” and have everyone bow down and worship him. The beastly appearance foreshadows the great cunning, power, and evil that will be present in the kingdom of the Antichrist. Although the Antichrist will greatly persecute the Saints and kill many of them, in the end, it will be the saints that ultimately prevail through Christ Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. They will become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven in the New Jerusalem, an eternal kingdom.

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

St. Nikolai Velimerovich, *the Prologue*, March 20, Homily:

“Who is the Lamb? Christ the Lord. Who is Lord of lords and King of kings? Christ the Lord. With whom shall He make war, and whom shall He overcome? The seven-headed monster with 10 horns and all who receive power and honour and riches from this unclean monster ...”

So who are these future 10 kings that will give their allegiance to the Antichrist and who will rule for one hour with him (i.e., a very short time)? We simply do not know at this time -- nor does anyone else here on earth. However, who they are will become perfectly clear at the time they arise.

Arias in his day was a type of Antichrist, who was overcome, by the holy hierarchs of the First Ecumenical Council acting in the power and wisdom of Christ Jesus through the



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Holy Spirit. Other heretics have arisen and others will arise in the future and draw a great following and persecute the Church. They are types of the Antichrist, forerunners of the final Antichrist. Much speculation has been made about them by the heterodox, secularists, and heretics of every persuasion -- with lots of books and articles continuing right up to the present. One of the more recent speculations comes from Messianic Jews [heterodox evangelical Jewish Christians]. They currently are pushing an Islamic world caliphate centered at Mecca as the beast and the Great Babylon, and their Caliph, the Mahdi, being the Antichrist. That certainly looks attractive. However, Orthodox Tradition tells us that the Antichrist will be a Jew from the tribe of Dan who eventually enters the Temple in Jerusalem and declares himself to be God and will demand that all bow down to him and worship him as their god, killing those who refuse. He will be a man born of fornication and who receives into himself the whole operation of Satan.

The city that ruled over the kings of the earth in St. John's time was Rome! Many through the centuries have believed that the city of the Antichrist will be Rome. Others have proposed that Jerusalem will be the city where the Antichrist places his throne, where his seat of power will be! But again, we will not know until he arrives on the scene, and we are able to synthesize all the various pieces of scripture with the writings of the Fathers.

But we will definitely know when Christ returns: St. Paul clearly tells us what to expect in **1 Thessalonians 4:16** ... *the LORD himself shall descend from heaven [in the same manner in which He ascended into Heaven on the Feast of Ascension] with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump [the blast of the shofar] of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD.* These signs will be unmistakable.

**Revelation 17:16** *And the ten horns which thou sawest [and] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his [the Antichrist's] will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast [the Antichrist], until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

The leaders of that future godless world culture, at the direction of the Antichrist, will no doubt even turn on an apostate Christian Rome or an apostate Jerusalem, or on whichever city the Antichrist will rule from. Nothing will stand in his way of being worshiped as "God", especially any non-orthodox religion which has captured the hearts of the people of those days and would otherwise appear to be dominant in the culture of that time. And that time will be a time such as the Scriptures say, that no one would survive unless those days were cut short.

Nevertheless, it is much more likely that many of us will die before this occurs. But

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some may live to see it, and struggle to survive in the kingdom of the Antichrist.

In the meantime, as we await Christ's Second Coming, let us continue to purify our hearts, and raise our voices in hymns and spiritual songs, and praise our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be ready to receive our Master, prepared as the Bride of Christ, the Church, to be ready to meet her Bridegroom, and enter the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, in brilliantly shining white wedding apparel, with the lamps of our souls lit brightly with the oil of grace of the Holy Spirit so that we will not be cast out!

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!