

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 38 - Chapter 17 Continued

Chapter 17 of Revelation has had our attention now for the 3rd straight week, and for good reason. It is a riddle wrapped up inside a puzzle; but it's a very important riddle to try and unpack, especially for followers of Christ. I have no doubt that many of the earliest prophecies about the coming of a Messiah must have seemed nearly incomprehensible to ancient Israelites, because the Prophet's words sometimes appeared as contradictory (if not nonsensical). The circumstances at times seemed impossible to imagine. How could a man also be God? How could a lion also be a lamb? How could death produce life? How could a virgin give birth? No doubt, just like us, those who knew the prophetic traditions, and later when they were written down read some of them, must have felt that those prophetic words were more akin to being teased and frustrated (as Samson did with his wedding party guests) rather than imparting intelligible information that one could act upon. And yet, centuries later when those prophecies turned into realities, every detail was proved to be true and accurate.

So keep your expectations in check with what we read about the Beast, the woman on the Beast, the meaning of the 7 heads and 10 horns, and of the kings and kingdoms they represent. I promise you that while we may be able to get a pretty good handle on some it, all will not become clear. Some of it likely won't make sense until it actually occurs. So why does God tell us these mysterious things centuries in advance? Because as we've been reading, we learn that in the end all the trials and tribulations will have been worth it for those who trust Him. And despite a lost world being led by scientists and the academic elite who keep searching the skies trying to figure out where life came from and how the Universe happened, and what meaning there is for it all, as God worshippers we already know the answers.... at least the answers to the questions that matter. We even know the outcome and the final chapter of human history and what happens after that. We know where the final days' epicenter of the activities and events on earth will be, and we even know the general characteristics of the most important players that will lead the world off the cosmic cliff. But; we don't know the year, and we don't know the players' names, and we don't know all the geopolitical circumstances and reshuffling that will happen to bring it all about. And we won't get all those answers in John's Apocalypse or in the Book of Daniel or anywhere else in God's Word.

In our desire to know the future we need to be careful not to become enchanted by some charismatic religious personality who says he or she DOES know. After all: if the Father has not revealed many of these details to His Son, He's not going to first reveal them to us. So now, let's learn what can be known, or at least perhaps cut down the list of possibilities to a more manageable size.

To briefly encapsulate what we discovered last time, the first 11 verses of Revelation 17 introduce us to the symbolic image of a woman (a harlot) seated upon a scarlet Beast. This Beast has 7 heads and 10 horns. Both the woman and the Beast represent the antithesis of

Godliness and the Kingdom of Heaven, and this is communicated to us by giving us examples of their mockery of God, Heaven, and all that He has ordained. For instance: the woman wears blasphemies on her forehead that is a mockery of the High Priest who wears the name of God on his. The Beast will ascend upward from the Abyss (the abode of evil, rebellious spirits) to the surface of the earth, while our Messiah will descend downward from Heaven (the abode of righteous spirits) to the surface of the earth. The woman holds a golden vessel full of filth and obscenities in her hand, as God sends forth His righteous wrath and fury from holy golden vessels, taken directly from God's Heavenly sanctuary, and carried by the hands of angels.

John was astounded by what he saw; not in the sense of fear and trepidation, but rather he was astounded in the sense of being greatly impressed and awed. So much so that an interpreting angel questioned John as to why he would be so bedazzled at this incredible sight. This angel goes on to tell John the truth behind the grand deception that he sees. "I will tell you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast with 7 heads and 10 horns that is carrying her", says the angel. But as we were just beginning to realize last week, that hidden meaning stays rather hidden even in the angel's cryptic explanation of it all.

What John is told would take too long to review, but briefly the angel says that the Beast was, now is not, and will come again later. Notice, once again, the mockery of God here. Still in our time, we can correctly say that Messiah was, now is not, and will come again later. So John is saying that what or who the Beast represents has existed historically on the earth in the past, but is now no longer on the earth (in John's day), although it will return at an undetermined later time. Next the angel gives the meaning of the 7 heads saying that they are 7 mountains (or hills) on which the woman is sitting. However they are also 7 kings. And of these 5 have fallen (meaning they existed in the historical past), 1 exists right now (in John's day), and 1 will come in the future. But, the 7 kings and/or kingdoms explanation is then amended in verse 11 when the angel tells John that there will be an 8th king and/or kingdom that is in some way related to the 7th. This statement, plus what comes next about the meaning of the 10 horns (which we'll cover today) is the heart of End Times Bible prophecy and from it has come a number of doctrines and beliefs about those End Times kings and kingdoms.

Before I remind you what I have concluded from this information I want you to look with me at chapter 17 verses 9 and 10. Depending on your Bible version what we'll look at is either entirely contained in verse 9 or it spills over into verse 10. And what we're going to do is to compare a few different translations that might help us to consider the meaning of this passage in a way that better fits with what surrounds it.

Our CJB says this:

CJB Revelation 17:9-10 ⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is sitting; also they are seven kings- ¹⁰ five have fallen, one is living now and the other is yet to come; and when he does come, he must remain only a little while.

However if we look at the reliable KJV, we read something slightly different.

KJV Revelation 17:9 *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, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*

And then there is Young's Literal Translation that is good to consult to get the most literal word for word translation without regard for whether it makes good sense in English.

YLT Revelation 17:9 *'Here is the mind that is having wisdom; the seven heads are seven mountains, upon which the woman doth sit, ¹⁰ and there are seven kings, the five did fall, and the one is, the other did not yet come, and when he may come, it behoveth him to remain a little time;*

The few words that might hold a key to help us understand a bit better is where the CJB (as well as other good translations) says about the 7 heads "THEY are 7 kings", but in the KJV, the YLT and other equally good translations it says "THERE are 7 kings". So the issue is that in the CJB translation it makes the 7 mountains both 7 kingdoms and 7 kings, and then the 5 fallen, 1 living now, and another yet to come seems to refer only to kings and thus we have some Bible scholars thinking that these are either 7 Roman Emperors or 7 Catholic Popes. But, by rendering it "There are 7 kings", it is like merely saying that in addition to 7 kingdoms there are also 7 kings existing, and this opens the door to the possibility that the 5 fallen, 1 living now, and another yet to come are referring NOT to kings but rather to kingdoms. Or it could be that we are being told that for each kingdom there is a specific king that we are to connect to it (among the many kings that a kingdom would have over time). Thus in one setting we should be looking for 7 kingdoms and then an 8th kingdom that comes from the 7th, and then in another setting we should be looking for 7 kings and then an 8th king that comes from the 7th king. In other words while the kings and kingdoms are interrelated in some way, nonetheless they are, and can be examined as, separate issues.

Last week I told you that I have come to the conclusion that the 7th kingdom is the Ottoman Empire; an Islamic empire that took over the final remnants of the Roman Empire. And when I say Roman Empire, I mean the Eastern Roman Empire, because in the 3rd century the Roman Empire had been intentionally divided into 2 Empires with 2 Emperors and 2 governments with 2 capitals because it had gotten so big that it became impossible for 1 emperor and 1 government to oversee. The Western Roman Empire remained governed from Rome until it dissolved late in the 5th century, but the Eastern Roman Empire continued on from its capital in what was called Byzantium (today called Istanbul). Thus historians have called the Eastern Roman Empire "The Byzantine Empire". That is confusing to the average non-historian person (something academics love to do!) but in practice and reality it was nothing more than the continuation of the Roman Empire by another name. And the Byzantine (Roman) Empire ended in the mid 1400's, taken over by an Islamic empire that has been labeled by historians as the Ottoman Empire.

Thus, if the 7th Kingdom was Islamic, and the 8th is going to be like it, then my conclusion is that the 8th Kingdom will also in some way be oriented towards Islam. I say "oriented towards" because even within the Ottoman Empire there were many Christian enclaves. It worked the

same way in the Roman Empire (the 6th kingdom) that rather early on become oriented towards Christianity; yet many enclaves of various pagan religions also remained. And to connect the dots, then the Anti-Christ would likely have some connection to Islam even if he may not be a Muslim. It may be, for instance, that he'll promote the Islamic religion and governments and use them to achieve his purposes. I caution once again: my conclusion is from our current vantage point in history. It is possible that by the time the Anti-Christ actually arrives, the geopolitical and religious realities of the world may have radically shifted again.

I'm going to proceed now to verse 12 about the 10 horns and their meaning and show you one way in which the number and purpose of the horns of the Beast connects with the number and purpose of the kingdoms (represented by the 7 heads). Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 17.

RE-READ REVELATION CHAPTER 17:12 - end

Notice how the 10 horns are, unequivocally, 10 kings. There is no ambiguity or dual nature of the horns like there is with the 7 heads that symbolize 7 mountains and can also indicate kings, or kingdoms, or perhaps both. These 10 kings are said to receive their power (their authority as heads of state) for 1 hour. As we've discussed in other settings, to say "for one hour" is meant as an expression. It means "for a relatively short time". It is like me saying to someone, "wait a minute". As my wife can well attest, rarely does that minute mean 60 seconds. For one hour means that whatever is the normal and usual period of time that we might think something ought to exist is cut short. And by saying that this includes the Beast means that the kings will receive their power at about the same time as the Beast, and in the same way that the kings will not last as long as one would expect, neither will the Beast. The fate of the kings is therefore intertwined with that of the Beast.

Verse 13 is key because it speaks of the relationship between the kings and the Beast. We learn that the kings will hand their authority over to the Beast and this is because they are single minded in purpose. No doubt they will not know all that the Beast intends, as we learn shortly. While I don't believe that the European Union is, or is even representative of, the 10 kings and their coalition, I do think it offers us a good illustration of what is going to happen in the future, and why it will happen, when these 10 kings of Revelation rule along with the Beast so it is worth examining.

The European Union has expanded it's member nations well beyond the original 6 and today number nearly 30. They would like that number to grow even larger under the right circumstances. And yet, some of the early member nations are growing dissatisfied with the Union and so are considering leaving it. England has already voted to leave and is going through massive political upheaval in the divorce process. The original purpose of the EU is clear and noble: it is an attempt to end the string of catastrophic intra-European wars that happens every few decades that includes massive suffering and loss of life. The way to achieve this was to set up a sort of federal government above that of each member nation; this is called the European Union and it has its own capital in Brussels. Their first goal was to make the European nation members a large trade block, which also allowed for easy movement of people and goods across borders without all the expense of tariffs, paperwork, different

standards by each nation, and a huge bureaucracy to control it. Even a new currency called the Euro was introduced to end issues of having to deal with exchange rate haggles over each nation's currency value. The system has generally worked well enough that other nations see the advantage of being part of the Union and have happily joined it.

However, the EU government that sits above the governments of each member state has slowly and steadily given itself more power and so has intervened more aggressively into each nation's affairs. An EU court system was established that can increasingly override each nation's justice system. The motto of the EU government is "an ever greater union". In other words, it is clear that in the end they want to extinguish most if not all national sovereignty and become a United States of Europe. And just to put an exclamation point on that motto, recently the massive influx of illegal aliens from the Middle East and Africa that has overwhelmed Europe, became the sole province of the EU according to their reading of the EU Treaty. Therefore, each member nation has absolutely no say in who is admitted to their country; they have lost control of the one thing that makes a nation sovereign: their borders and who wins the right to live there. This was a wake up call to some of the EU nations while others just accepted this new reality. Like the frog-in-the-kettle proverb, nobody really saw this outcome coming, even though the EU politicians had always intended this transfer of power.... and more.... to themselves. As a result a couple of years ago the British people voted to leave the EU as many now understand the downside of the EU and the real goal of the EU leadership; to end the concept of nations in Europe as we know them today. Bottom line: something like this is likely what is going to happen to install the Anti-Christ as the King of the World. A gradual shifting of power to a world governing body, and an accompanying lack of national sovereignty is the hope of a growing number of people and their leaders. These 10 national leaders in Revelation 17 (the 10 horns of the Beast) will naively think that by installing their man (the Anti-Christ) at the top of a one-world government... a man whom they intend to control.... that they will have a stooge to do their will. He will almost immediately turn the tables on them.

So as of verse 14 in Revelation 17, these 10 kings and the Beast are a team, working together to rule the world. And it is said that they will determine to go to war against the Lamb. We discussed this in an earlier lesson but it bears repeating: do not get a mental picture of an Anti-Christ figure with 2 horns hidden under a beautiful head of hair and a forked tail neatly tucked inside his tailor-made trousers. Nor think of the combined armies of several nations going to battle against a heavenly army of ghost-like souls and our Messiah riding a white horse across the skies. This will be a war just like all previous wars: humans against humans, fought for a political reason. It is only that they don't understand the spiritual power behind it all. And clearly by saying that the armies of the world will be fighting the Lamb can only mean that those living humans who follow and trust the Lamb (Messiah Yeshua) will be fighting against those living humans who follow and trust the Beast..... the Anti-Christ. Their identification is simple: those with 666 written on their bodies belong to Satan; those who refuse the mark are God's.

Let's break away for a moment now to talk a little more about those 10 kings. But in order to do this we'll have to turn to the Book of Daniel.

READ DANIEL CHAPTER 7 all

Let me say upfront that the 4th beast of Daniel with the 10 horns is indeed relevant to the Beast of Revelation 17 with the 10 horns. However they are not a precise one-for-one comparison. That is, despite the rather standard church doctrine that the 4th beast of Daniel is the Beast upon which the Harlot rides, that cannot be so. And the reason is that while Daniel's 4th beast indeed had 10 horns, it had only 1 head. But John's Beast has 7 heads to go with its 10 horns. Looking a little closer, however, we see that if we add up all the heads and horns of Daniel's 4 beasts, we do wind up with 7 heads and 10 horns. So it is my contention that John's Beast is an amalgamation of all 4 of Daniel's beasts. Thus John's Beast carries with it characteristics of all of Daniel's beasts; some that are common among them, some that might be unique to each of them. And what is most common is the general territories that each of these 4 beasts lords over; it is an area all around the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa, and the Middle East. Essentially, each succeeding kingdom took the former kingdoms' territories away from them; it was mostly an exchange of governments. It was a transfer of power and territory. Their goals and aims were generally the same: a gentile government ruling over as much of the known world as they could conquer and hold.

Daniel 7 tells us in verse 8 that in addition to the 10 horns, another one suddenly sprang up..... a little one. But accompanying the rise of this new 11th horn, 3 of the existing 10 were plucked out and discarded. Let's do some quick math. 10 horns, plus a new little one = 11 horns. Then 3 horns are removed. $11 - 3 = 8$. Since the symbolism is that horns equals kings, then we wind up with 7 original kings plus a special 8th one. This corresponds perfectly to the Revelation 17 passage that says that there were 7 heads representing 7 kings, but another one arose later making 8.

And yet, while horns in the Bible typically represent kings, mountains typically represent governments or kingdoms. So going back to the statement in Revelation 17 of the 7 heads representing 7 mountains, then I think we can now better see the connection of the heads of the Beast with the horns of the Beast; they work together in the End Times but no earlier. That is: the 10 horns of Revelation plus the Beast, are the same as the 10 horns plus the little one of Daniel 7, and they show a progression of how these governments and kings are going get established and work together.

In relation to our time (NOT John's time), 7 kingdoms have already come and gone: The Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Media-Persian, Greek, Roman, and Ottoman. These are the 7 heads of John's Beast said to represent 7 mountains; and mountains represent kingdoms. And yet, one of the 7 heads representing the 7th kingdom will somehow sort of reincarnate at a later time into an 8th. Now after discussing the symbolism of the 7 heads, the 10 horns of John's Beast come into play. Those 10 horns are said by Daniel to be 10 kings who live in the day that the Beast comes again; and when the Beast comes again it will be to rule over an 8th empire. Those 10 kings will help him accomplish it. So while the kingdoms represented by those 7 heads are in the past for us, those 10 kings represented by the 10 horns are still in the future to us. Because Daniel 7 tells us that the Anti-Christ will be an 11th horn (an 11th king) who in the process of coming to power gets rid of 3 of the original 10 kings, that leaves a grand total of 8 kings including the Anti-Christ as the 8th. This again comports with the words of Revelation 17 that an 8th king and 8th kingdom will arise after the 7 kingdoms have come and gone. And the 8th kingdom will have some strong relation to the 7th kingdom of the past. So

now we see how Daniel 7 and Revelation 17 work together, and how the 7 heads and 10 horns of Revelation 17 Beast connect with the 4 beasts and 10 horns of Daniel 7. And how the 7 heads are mostly about the past, and the 10 horns are mostly about the future..... the End Times.

I know this is complicated. And I know that as the decades move by, something could change or bring us new information that we don't have today and that could alter my conclusion. But as of 2019, this is how I see it.

Now let's make another connection. Back in Revelation 17:10 we read this:

CJB Revelation 17:10 *five have fallen, one is living now and the other is yet to come; and when he does come, he must remain only a little while.*

The phrase we're looking at is "a little while". I told you last time that the 7th kingdom is the Ottoman Empire, but the major challenge to my contention is that the Bible says it would last only a little while. The Ottoman Empire, however, lasted for many centuries even after it defeated the remainder of the Roman Empire. Many scholars I have consulted also find the phrase "a little while" difficult because it is so indeterminate and ambiguous. In fact, the Greek word used is **oligos** and it can mean a few, a little, or small and it can be used as an adjective or an adverb. Usually the Greek Bible passages use the word **mikron** when the reference is to a little bit of time as many interpreters take it to mean in our passage. So in Daniel 7:8, the description of the horn that springs up among the existing 10 is as a *little* one. A *little* horn in size compared to the other 10 horns of Daniel's beast; but the same horn in Revelation is said to last only a *little* while... at least that is the consensus of Bible translators. So the term *little* has some role in all this but it is not clear to me what this is telling us. Is it speaking of a short time? Is it speaking of a small stature? Is it speaking of little as the opposite of great? Is it speaking of humble beginnings? Is it speaking of the amount of time, or territory, or something that is in relation to similar things that preceded it? I don't know. But since I don't know what it's getting at, then I'm not going to assume that it means that the 7th kingdom must only exist for a short time, but rather it means something else.

The final part of verse 14 makes it clear that real, alive human beings are going to be fighting on the side of good and righteousness against the forces of the Anti-Christ. These are Believers in Yeshua: no other category of people other than Believers can combine the epithet of "called, chosen, and faithful". These are not Jews in general or gentiles in general; these Believers will come from both communities. And these Believers are saying that in Christ's strength, and under His leadership, they will overcome Satan and his forces. Overcome is purely a redemptive term and it means to conquer evil and sin. So since the souls of Believers in Heaven have already "overcome", then the army of Believers that will battle the Anti-Christ on planet Earth will also now have to overcome in a replay of the battle against Satan that already happened in Heaven.

In verse 15 we learn that the waters where the woman on the Beast is sitting symbolically represents all humanity. Recall that the Beast is the name for the Sea Beast that emerged from the waters earlier in Revelation. Then we hear of an interesting turn of events, and I think that

what this is going to mean is becoming evident even in our day. We are told that the 10 horns of the Beast (those 10 kings) will turn against the woman, the Harlot, Babylon the Great, the wicked world system, and bring her to ruin. To leave her naked means to shame her. To eat her flesh means to take that which she owned. And to consume her with fire means to utterly destroy her. Pause and reflect: if these 10 kings were part and parcel of the wicked world system like the wealthiest and most powerful nations are today, why would they destroy the very system that brings them their wealth and power? They wouldn't, because they aren't part of that system.

In our day, Islam sees the West and our entire system of money, religion, commerce, lifestyle, law, etc., as the Great Satan. It stands for everything they are against, and it is this that they seek to bring to ruin. Fundamentalist Islam wants a complete return to the ways of the ancient times. While the various Islamic groups fight one another, they will often temporarily join together to fight representatives of the world system like the USA, and much of the EU. Since the woman on the Beast is representative of the wicked world system that is entirely Western in its character, then it says that something about her causes the 10 kings to suddenly attack and destroy her. But since clearly to begin with she uses the assets that the Beast provides to her benefit, and they use hers, the time will come when the Beast and the 10 kings don't need or want her any longer. I believe that these 10 kings will be leaders of Islamic nations, or perhaps kings that support Islamic goals and ideals. And by definition the woman, Babylon the Great, represents the secular Western world and the corrupt, faithless, religious world of that part of institutional Christianity that has forsaken God's ways and has instead adopted the ways of the wicked world system. As says verse 17, the treachery of the 10 kings is because it is God who put it in their hearts to hate Babylon the Great in order that they would serve as a judgment upon her. Destroying the woman will only strengthen the grip of the Beast over the world.... but this will last just for a short time.

Chapter 18 speaks of the moment of her collapse that we have now learned will be at the hands of the Beast and those kings. It has always been amazing to me how God will use one group of wicked people to punish and judge another group of wicked people, and then finally He will judge the survivors supernaturally. It may be difficult to spot as this principle is in operation, but there is no doubt that this principle didn't end with the close of the Old Testament.

Next up: Revelation 18.