

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE WHORE OF REVELATION 17

By Brandon Ogden

The following essay is a review of the 17th chapter of Revelation. I do not assume to have all the answers, nor do I believe that this is the only viable interpretation of this chapter. However, I do believe that the contextual evidence in Revelation, and specifically this chapter, rules out certain interpretations which point exclusively to a late fulfillment, such as those taught in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Therefore, I put this view forward, as others have before me, as only one possibility. I have not repeated each of the studied verses verbatim, therefore, it may be beneficial to have a Bible nearby while reading this essay in order to reference the verses discussed.

Adventists and others have traditionally identified the Harlot of Revelation 17 as the Roman Catholic Church. I disagree with this interpretation and I believe that the identification of the harlot can be made by simply examining the Bible's use of the term, which would have been very familiar to Jewish Christians. In nearly every instance that scripture uses the term harlot as a metaphor, it has been directed at apostate Jerusalem.

However, Adventists generally point to two passages in particular in Chapter 17 in order to support their belief that the harlot is the Roman Catholic Church. These passages are Revelation 17:9-10 and Revelation 17:18. The first passage Rev 17:9-10 states (NASB) "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits, 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."

Often I have heard Adventists say that the seven hills of these verses are the Seven Hills of Rome, and since only the Catholic Church sits in proximity to these seven hills, the harlot of Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church. The second text (Revelation 17:18) refers to the woman as a great city, and a similar approach involving Vatican City is used to identify the Catholic Church, the only religious "City-State", as the "great city" referred to in this verse.

As Chilton says:

"Merely to find some example of a 'false church' and identify her as the whore is not faithful exegesis."¹

One of the first things we must note is that the first verse of chapter 17, states that the great whore "is seated" (present tense) on many waters when this chapter in Revelation was written. To accept that the harlot existed concurrently with Pagan Rome would in and of its self do much to quell the assertion that the great whore represents the Roman Catholic Church.

¹ Chilton, D. (1987) *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the book of Revelation*. Retrieved from: http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1987_chilton_days-of-vengeance.pdf on 2/1/07.

While most commentators have traditionally placed the authorship of the book of Revelation (or The Apocalypse) around the year 95AD, I believe, along with a growing number of scholars, that the authorship of the book of Revelation was much earlier, and prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.² The symbolism of the book is drawn from Jewish scripture and in fact throughout the Old Testament, Jerusalem is repeatedly represented as a harlot, playing to the lusts of other nations, while betraying her own "groom". This scandalous position of Israel was forged eternally before the death of Christ, when the priests of Jerusalem cried out, "We have no king but Caesar."³ Jerusalem never again turned back to her groom, but rather continued to play the harlot even when Christ Himself became incarnate. A brief review of several Old Testament passages established the link between Jerusalem and the whore of Revelation.

Ezekiel 16: 1-3, 26

(Ezek 16:1 NASB) Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

(Ezek 16:2 NASB) "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations,

(Ezek 16:3 NASB) and say, 'Thus **says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem**, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

(Ezek 16:26 NASB) "You also played the **harlot** with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied **your harlotry** to make Me angry."

Isaiah 1:1, 21

"(Isa 1:1 NASB) The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, **concerning Judah and Jerusalem** which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

... (Isa 1:21 NASB) **How the faithful city has become a harlot**, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers."

Jeremiah 3:1-2,6-8

(Jer 3:1 NASB) God says, "If a husband divorces his wife, And she goes from him, And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? **But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me,**" declares the LORD.

(Jer 3:2 NASB) "Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see; Where have you not been violated? By the roads you have sat for them Like an Arab in the desert, **And you have polluted a land With your harlotry** and with your wickedness.

(Jer 3:6 NASB) Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, **and she was a harlot there.**

(Jer 3:7 NASB) "And I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

(Jer 3:8 NASB) "**And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel**, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also."

Jeremiah 5:1, 5-7

"(Jer 5:1 NASB) "Roam to and fro through the **streets of Jerusalem**, And look now, and take note. And seek in her open squares, If you can find a man, If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her.... (Jer 5:7 NASB) "Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me And sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, **They committed adultery And trooped to the harlot's house.**"⁴

² For a quick overview of the an earlier dating of Revelation please see: <http://www.credenda.org/issues/9-3eschaton.php>, or http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyBible/Revelation/Articles/revelation_earlydate.html

³ (John 19:15 NASB) They therefore cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said^ to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

⁴ See also Ezekiel 23:1-5, 11, 17-19

As can be clearly seen, no other city, nation, or even religious system in scripture was ever equated to a harlot like Jerusalem and Israel. This makes perfect sense, since only Jerusalem established a covenant, or a type of marriage agreement, with God, therefore, only she could abandon that covenant.

In Revelation 17:3 we find John carried away in spirit to a wilderness. To the Jews the wilderness represented a time of rebellion against God, the Israelites were remanded to the wilderness for failure to trust and obey God. So here again we now see that the harlot is in the wilderness, just as in the Old Testament, she did not trust God enough to be led into the eternal Promised Land.

We also see the scarlet beast in this verse. The scarlet beast represents the power that ultimately destroyed the nation of Israel; Rome! There are two interpretations that I accept about this beast, the first is that it is a combination of the four beasts of Daniel, hence the 7 heads and 10 horns are a sum of each of the beasts represented in that book. The second interpretation that is viable to me, is that this beast represents the Caesars (7 heads) who exercised their power through their provincial kings (10 horns). In either instance, the clear message is that there is a union of powers within the beast, which fight against the holy ones of God and ultimately turn on the harlot.

Revelation 17:4 goes on to discuss the clothing and adornment of the harlot, specifically mentioning the scarlet, purple, and jewels which adorned her. Amazing Facts, which is an Adventist run media ministry, makes this conclusion about Rev 17:4:

“Another interesting clue is found in verse 4: ‘And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour.’ Anyone who has visited the Vatican can confirm that these are the predominant colors which are in evidence around St. Peter’s Square. Scarlet-robed cardinals are among the most frequent visitors to the papal head of state and church.”⁵

As we review this assertion from Amazing Facts, it is interesting to remember that this passage was written to Christians in the first century, long before the Vatican was built and Cardinals ran about in red robes. In fact it was not until 1467 that Pope Paul required the robes of Cardinals to be dyed red.⁶ Surely the first century Christians would not have understood this passage in the same way that Adventists want us to interpret it now. After all, the first verse of the chapter, states that the Harlot “IS” seated among many waters, the woman was written to represent an entity that existed in the first century, and which was “seated” when John wrote this passage. The Adventist position holds that the harlot would not manifest until several centuries later. Any separation of this chapter from the original audience, the first century Christians, does harm to the context and twists the meaning of the warning contained in its pages.

The first century Christians would have likely recognized the colors and description of the harlot’s adornment as a reference to the decorations of the Jewish temple that was located in Jerusalem. These were the colors commanded by Moses to be used in the Temple construction.

⁵ Crews, J. (1992) *The Scarlet Woman*. Retrieved from: http://www.amazingfacts.org/items/Read_Book.asp?x=52&y=8&SelLang=en&ID=36 on 2/1/07.

⁶ While scarlet is a shade of red, it is generally more orange than the color of the robes worn by Cardinals of the Catholic Church.

In addition, verse 4 mentions that the harlot was decorated with many gems or jewels. Again we can see this as a direct reference back to the passages from the Old Testament, regarding the Temple and the adornment of the High Priest in Jerusalem.

Exodus 35:30 - 36:1

"(Exo 35:30 NASB) Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

(Exo 35:31 NASB) "And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship;

(Exo 35:32 NASB) to make designs for **working in gold** and in silver and in bronze,

(Exo 35:33 NASB) and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work.

(Exo 35:34 NASB) "He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

(Exo 35:35 NASB) "He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer **and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen**, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs.

(Exo 36:1 NASB) "Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded."

Exodus 39: 1-2

(Exo 39:1 NASB) Moreover, from the blue and purple and scarlet material, they made finely woven garments for ministering in the holy place, as well as the holy garments which were for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

(Exo 39:2 NASB) **And he made the ephod of gold, and of blue and purple and scarlet material, and fine twisted linen.**

Verses 8-14

(Exo 39:8 NASB) And he made the breastpiece, the work of a skillful workman, like the workmanship of the ephod: of gold and of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen.

(Exo 39:9 NASB) It was square; they made the breastpiece folded double, a span long and a span wide when folded double.

(Exo 39:10 NASB) And they mounted four rows of stones on it. The first row was a row of ruby, topaz, and emerald;

(Exo 39:11 NASB) and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond;

(Exo 39:12 NASB) and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

(Exo 39:13 NASB) and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They were set in gold filigree settings when they were mounted.

(Exo 39:14 NASB) And the stones were corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were twelve, corresponding to their names, engraved with the engravings of a signet, each with its name for the twelve tribes.

Notice that Exodus 39:14 tells us that the gems that decorated the priest corresponded to the sons of Israel. It is only fitting that this description is again used in Revelation to reveal the identity of the harlot and instill in God's people his warning.

Revelation 17:5-6 goes on to tell us about the sins of the harlot. Specifically, John tells us that the harlot is drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus. Again this passage gives us a date context, because only a first century fulfillment could include the witnesses of Jesus. Adventism claims that the blood spilled by the harlot was that of the various religious groups which were persecuted by the Catholic Church in the middle ages. While many atrocities were committed by the European countries and corrupt church leaders, the Adventist explanation

does not explain the fact that the harlot was full of the blood of those who were witnesses to Christ. The witnesses to Christ could have only lived in the first century.

Scripture however is very clear about who Christ held responsible for the blood of the martyrs. Compare Revelation 17:5-6 with these statements about Jerusalem found in the Gospels and notice the similarity of language and voice used by the Gospel writers and John.

Luke 11:47-51

"(Luke 11:47 NASB) "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

(Luke 11:48 NASB) "Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs.

(Luke 11:49 NASB) "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

(Luke 11:50 NASB) **in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,**

(Luke 11:51 NASB) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

Luke 13:31-34

"(Luke 13:31 NASB) Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, "Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."

(Luke 13:32 NASB) And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'

(Luke 13:33 NASB) "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

(Luke 13:34 NASB) **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"**

Matthew 23:29-37

"(Mat 23:29 NASB) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

(Mat 23:30 NASB) and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

(Mat 23:31 NASB) "Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

(Mat 23:32 NASB) **"Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers.**

(Mat 23:33 NASB) "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

(Mat 23:34 NASB) "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,

(Mat 23:35 NASB) **that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.**

(Mat 23:36 NASB) **"Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.**

(Mat 23:37 NASB) **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."**

Matthew 24:34

NASB "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

The final verse quoted above shows that the judgment against Jerusalem would take place in the first century. Revelation 17 is a final warning before that judgment executed through the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

“The Bible places the blame for persecuting the church squarely at the feet of Israel/Jerusalem; not on Rome!

It was the Sanhedrin that beat Peter and John, Acts 4-5; and stoned Stephen, Acts 6-7. The Jews instigated a "great persecution" against the church in Jerusalem, Acts 8. Saul the persecutor of the early church had letters of authority from the High Priest to persecute Christians, Acts 9:2-3. Even Herod, when persecuting the church did so to please the Jews, Acts 12:1-3. The Jews in Antioch stirred up the city against Paul, Acts 13:50. The Jews stirred up the Gentiles to persecute Paul in Iconium and Derbe, Acts 14:4ff, 19f. At Thessalonica the Jews "set all the city in an uproar" attempting to kill Paul, Acts 17:5f. The Jews attempted to involve the Romans against Paul but they refused to persecute him, Acts 18:12ff. The Romans actually rescued Paul from the Jews, Acts 21:27-40.”⁷

According to tradition, James the Just, was also put to death by the Jews in Jerusalem being thrown from the spires of the temple and subsequently clubbed to death in AD 62 when he was reported to be 96 years old. Certainly the words of Christ placing the blood of the martyrs on Jerusalem, and the ensuing persecution of the very witnesses of Christ, as recorded in scripture, gives us a much more certain interpretation of this verse than does speculation made against the Catholic Church in more recent centuries.

As move along to Rev 17:18, an interesting note is that many commentators believe that the term for “earth” in this verse should be more properly interpreted “Land”, referring to the Promised Land. This would seem to indicate that the beast (which for the purposes of this essay I assume to be Rome) had lost much of its power in Jerusalem at the time of the writing of Revelation 17. However, here John warns that the beast will again come to exert control over those in Jerusalem. This would match with the initial defeat of the Romans in the mid AD 60’s, and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Revelation 17:9-10 are a couple of the bread and butter passages often used by Adventist evangelists to point to the Vatican, which incidentally is not seated on seven hills and is in fact across the river Tiber from Rome, as the harlot. John Hellmann lists the following about the Seven Hills of Rome which are; “the Palatine, Aventine, Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, and the Caelian Hill. However, Saint Peter’s Basilica was built on Vatican Hill, Collis Vaticanus, which is on the other side of the Tiber River and is not one of the Seven Hills referred to as Rome’s seven hills. In fact St. Peter Basilica’s high altar was built directly on top of Saint Peter’s grave which was well outside of the city of Rome.”

However, as we may expect by now, the “reference to the seven hills in these verses does fit well into a Jerusalem interpretation of the harlot. Jerusalem was a large city spreading beyond the walls of the fort and onto the seven hills which were there during the time of Jesus and the Apostles. It’s seven hills are; 1.) Mount Gared; 2.) Mount Goath; 3.) Mount Acra; 4.) Mount Bezetha; 5.) Mount Moriah; 6.) Mount Ophel; 7.) Mount Zion.

⁷ Preston, D.K. (n.d.) *Babylon the Great of Revelation*. Retrieved from: http://www.preteristarchive.com/Preterism/preston-don_p_03.html on February 2, 2007.

Mount Calvary is presently leveled for the most part. It was a major quarry that was used for the building of the city. As the quarrymen cut into the stone layer by layer they discovered a section that was flawed. A crack in that section made it unusable so they cut around it. As they cut and cleared away the stone slabs from around the flawed section it left an outcropping rising thirty feet from the floor of the quarry to where the top of the hill had once been. It was into this flawed crack that many believe the Roman's placed the upright beam of the cross of the criminals that they crucified to place fear into their subjects. And it was here that Christ gave his life for our salvation."⁸

In fulfillment of the dual meaning of the seven hills, there were seven kings who gave Jerusalem its authority and power over the people of God, they were: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. The one which was reigning is referred to as living was Nero, the sixth Caesar. The one still to come was Galba, the seventh Caesar who ruled for less than seven months.

Moving on to the next verse Revelation 17:11 NASB "**And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.**

Notice that at the time of the writing of this, the beast WAS and IS NOT and is an eighth that belongs to the seven. Again this language commands a first century fulfillment. One commentator makes the following note about this verse.

“But the fall of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the severe political chaos attending it must not be interpreted by Christians to mean the end of troubles. For their real enemy is **the Beast**, who will become incarnated in other Caesars as well. He is **also an eighth** king, yet is **of the seven**: the antichristian brutality of succeeding tyrants will mark them as being of the same stripe as their predecessors. *Eight* is the number of resurrection in the Bible; St. John is warning that even though the Empire will seem to disintegrate after the rule of the seven kings, it will be “resurrected” again, to live on in other persecutors of the Church. Yet the Empire’s comeback will not result in victory for the Beast, for even the eighth, the resurrected Beast, **goes to destruction**. The Church will have to exercise patience during the period of the Beast’s ascendancy, but she has the assurance that her enemies will not succeed. Their King will be victorious; His servants have been predestined to share in His triumph.”⁹

In Revelation 17:12 we come back to the 10 horns of the beast. In scripture the number 10 has been said to refer to the concept of “manyness”, of quantitative or numerical fullness. These kings are associated with, or in alliance with, the beast. It is interesting to note that Rome actually did have 10 imperial provinces, and these kings may refer to the provincial rulers. The ten provinces were: Italy, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany.

Then in verses 13 and 14 we find that it is through the beast, or power of Pagan Rome, that the Jews were allowed to persecute the Christians. It was first the Jews, and then Pagan Rome, which made war with the Christians. The fiercest persecution up until Nero was from the Jews themselves. In fact Israel was so corrupt that Paul actually had to **appeal to ROME** to get a fair hearing when he was captured by the Jews.

⁸ Hellmann, J. (n.d.) Defending the Bride. Retrieved from: <http://members.aol.com/johnprh/whore2.html#seven> on February 2, 2007.

⁹ Chilton, D. (1987) *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the book of Revelation*. Retrieved from: http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1987_chilton_days-of-vengeance.pdf on 2/1/07.

Paul In Caesarea (Acts 23:31-26:32)

After five days, the elders and the chief priest arrived in Caesarea and accused Paul before the governor of profaning the temple but couldn't prove anything, so Felix deferred them but left Paul in custody. After two years Felix was replaced by Festus, who asked Paul's accusers to come to Caesarea again. They couldn't prove any of their many complaints against Paul. As a Roman citizen, Paul then appealed to Caesar. While he was waiting to go to Rome, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea, and one day Festus brought Paul before them. *Acts 26* records Paul's speech, where he tells his upbringing, his former madness against Christians, his conversion on the road to Damascus and his preaching of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Here we find the most complete version of what Jesus said to him on the road to Damascus. King Agrippa said to Festus that Paul had done nothing wrong and he could have been set free, had he not appealed unto Caesar.¹⁰

Revelation 17:15 portrays the harlot as being seated on waters, which are a multitude of people. Jerusalem could truly be portrayed as seated on "many waters", because of her great and pervasive influence the Jews had in all parts of the Roman Empire, PRIOR to the destruction of Jerusalem. Their synagogues were in every city, and the extent of their colonization can be seen in the record of the Day of Pentecost, which tells us that there were Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.¹¹

When Adventists try to insert the Vatican or Catholic Church into this chapter, they often stumble over the explanation of how John could have said that the harlot (or Vatican in Adventist eschatology) "IS SEATED" on the people, multitudes and nations, when they often deny that the Catholic Church even existed at this time.

In Revelation 17:16 we find (NASB) "**And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.**

We see here the prediction that Rome (the beast) would become furious with Jerusalem and "hate the harlot" This hatred eventually resulted in the total destruction of the city of Jerusalem, exactly fulfilling the words of this verse that the harlot would become desolate. Further, the verse concludes by pointing out that the judgment will also come by fire, and she will be burned up. Josephus in his book *The Jewish War* gives us a harrowing description of the burning of Jerusalem:

"Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise - nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined."¹²

This seemed to be a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy against Jerusalem which predicted that she would become desolate and be burned with fire.

Leviticus 26: 15-16, 27- 28

"(Lev 26:15 NASB) if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,

¹⁰ Retrieved from: <http://www.allaboutturkey.com/paul.htm> on February 2, 2007.

¹¹ (Acts 2:5 NASB) Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

¹² "The Romans Destroy the Temple at Jerusalem, 70 AD," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2005).

(Lev 26:16 NASB) I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies shall eat it up.

(Lev 26:31 NASB) **'I will lay waste your cities as well, and will make your sanctuaries desolate; and I will not smell your soothing aromas.**

Ezekiel 16: 2-3, 35, 38, 41

" Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations. Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem ... 35 Therefore, harlot, hear the word of the LORD! ...

38 I will inflict on you the sentence of adulteresses and murderesses; I will wreak fury and jealousy upon you. ... **41 They shall burn your apartments with fire and inflict punishments on you while many women look on. Thus I will put an end to your harlotry, and you shall never again give payment.**"

NAB (emphasis added)

Ezekiel 23: 2-4, 17-19, 22-25, 44-47

" Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother, who even as young girls played the harlot in Egypt. ... (As for their names: Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah.) ... 22 Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD: ... 25 ... They shall take away your sons and daughters, **and what is left of you shall be devoured by fire.** ...

44 And indeed they did come to her as men come to a harlot. Thus they came to Oholah and Oholibah, the lewd women.

45 But just men shall punish them with the sentence meted out to adulteresses and murderesses, for they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands.

... 47 The assembly shall stone them and hack them to pieces with their swords. **They shall slay their sons and daughters, and burn their houses with fire.**" NAB (emphasis added)

(Also see Lamentations 2:4, and 4:11, as well as Ezekiel 19:12, 21:2-3, 22:19-21)

Unfaithfulness to God is frequently compared to sexual immorality, the penalty for fornication by the daughter of the priest called for a special punishment. She was to be burned to death.

Leviticus 21:9

"(Lev 21:9 NASB) 'Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.'"

So, when Jerusalem was offered the ability to accept Christ in person, but instead rejected Him, she seals her fate as the "Whore of Babylon" who is subsequently burnt to death as the daughter of the High Priest, Christ.

Revelation 17:17 explains that God's judgment would be executed by the beast (Rome) with the handing over of "their kingdom" to the Romans until God's words are fulfilled. We find this fulfillment in the siege of Jerusalem from AD 67-70. The Romans were given the city and eventually destroyed the city by fire, just as the words of God predicted.

Finally, we come to Revelation 17:18 (NASB) **"And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."** Jerusalem, who had the role to bring God's law to the rest of the nations, had a spiritual sovereignty over all the nations. We see this indicated through the history of God's people, but also poetically expressed in the following passage.

Psalm 2:6-9

(Psa 2:6 NASB) "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

(Psa 2:7 NASB) "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee.

(Psa 2:8 NASB) '**Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.**

(Psa 2:9 NASB) "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware."

The final and most conclusive identifying characteristic of the harlot is found in this last verse in the chapter. The harlot is said to be "the great city", not "a" great city, but "the" great city. This was a description which John had previously used and had identified clearly as the city in which Christ was crucified. But even prior to John, in fact prior to the New Testament, we can trace the use of the term "great city" to Jerusalem, such as in Jeremiah 22:8.

The ultimate revelation of the harlot, however, is found by comparing Rev. 17:18 with Rev 11:8, which says:

"And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." (NASB)

Only one city on earth fits the description of "the great city" as given in both Rev 17 and Rev 11. Jerusalem was destroyed by fire, by the Romans (the beast), it was also the city in which Christ was crucified. Jerusalem was the only bride of Christ which could have committed harlotry against Him in the first century. Jerusalem persecuted the saints and the witnesses of Christ; she had the pronouncement of guilt from Christ Himself against her. Jerusalem is the harlot, the whore of Babylon.

The book of Revelation is about the covenant with God and the end of an age. The destruction of Jerusalem was the final judgment against the generation that ultimately rejected God. Christ promised that the generation he preached to in Jerusalem would not pass away before they saw the judgment against them.

(Luke 11:49 NASB) "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

(Luke 11:50 NASB) in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,

(Luke 21:32 NASB) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."
(Rev 22:20-22 NASB)