

THE BEAST AND THE WOMAN

PART I

IDENTITY OF THE BEAST AND THE WOMAN IN REV. 17-19A

By Arlen L. Chitwood

“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 [with great wonder]...

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:6, 18).

“The woman” is mentioned first in the introductory material (Rev. 17:1-7), but the order is reversed in the identification (vv. 8-18). “The Beast” is identified first, and the woman is then identified. And, as the identity of the Beast is contingent on *previous revelation*, so it is with the identity of the woman.

One must reference *that which has already been revealed* (which would include not only the preceding chapters in the Book of Revelation but revelation preceding this book as well, particularly that seen in the Old Testament). And, interpreting chapters seventeen through the first part of nineteen in this manner (which is *the only Biblical way* to properly interpret them), both the woman and the Beast can be easily identified, *leaving no question concerning the proper identity of either one.*

The Beast

“The Beast” is identified as *the ruler of a ten-kingdom federation of nations during the Tribulation* (v. 12). The reference to his being the eighth but of the seven (vv. 8-11) is apparently a reference

to this man coming into power as the seventh head, receiving the deadly wound by the sword, and then being healed (previously stated in 13:3, 14) — becoming the eighth in this manner, but still of the seven.

In verse nine, “the seven heads” are said to be *seven mountains*. And, in Scripture, “a mountain” is often used in a metaphorical sense referring to *a kingdom* (e.g., Isa. 2:1-4; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Matt. 17:1ff), which is what verse ten goes on to say.

These “seven mountains,” used in a metaphorical sense, in this particular instance refer to *the kings themselves — seven kings of a kingdom (or kingdoms)*. Verse nine should literally read, “And they [the seven mountains previously mentioned] are seven kings...” These verses form an ultimate description of the kingdom of the Beast (after the seventh king, the Beast, comes into power), “on which the woman sitteth [or, ‘where the woman resides’].”

The thought of the woman residing within the kingdom of the Beast is identical to and in complete keeping with the woman residing in the midst of the nations in verses one and fifteen. Residing *in the midst of one* would really be part and parcel to residing *in the midst of the other*, for the kingdom of the Beast in that coming day will encompass *all nations* (cf. vv. 1, 7, 9, 15).

The Woman

“The woman” is then identified. And, in the light of the way that the woman is depicted in relation to both the nations and the kingdom of the Beast (residing in their midst), the thought in verse seven of the Beast carrying the woman must, contextually, be understood in a similar sense — *the Beast bearing the woman* in the sense of *the woman being identified with the Beast* (cf. John 19:15; note the way that this same word in the Greek text is used in Luke 14:27 and John 16:12 [translated, “bear”]).

The identity of the woman is given following a sequence of events which brings the reader to at least the middle of the Tribulation, when the Beast has come into power as world ruler (all seven heads crowned [cf. Rev. 12:3; 17:7]) and turns on the woman in all his fury, *seeking to destroy her from off the face of the earth* (v. 16; cf. 12:13-16).

This man will be *seated on Satan’s throne, exhibiting power and authority given to him by Satan* (Rev. 13:2). And God, at this time, will allow that depicted in Revelation chapters twelve, thirteen, and seventeen through the first part of nineteen to occur in order to bring about *the destruction of the harlot* (not the destruction of the woman, as this man will attempt, but the doing away with the woman’s harlotry [Rev. 12:13-17; 17:16, 17; cf. Matt. 24:15ff; Luke 21:20ff]).

That is to say, *God will use the most corrupt form of Gentile world power that this world has ever known or ever will know to ultimately bring to pass His plans and purposes regarding the woman.*

Then, in Rev. 17:18, the woman is identified beyond question, through *two different means*:

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

The woman is first said to be “that great city.” And comparing Scripture with Scripture, allowing Scripture to interpret itself, the identity of “that great city” has to be understood in the light of the way in which it has already been given in the book. As previously stated, it appears evident and can be shown contextually that “Babylon” is used as a *metaphor* in both 14:8 and 16:19 when referencing “that great city,” which had previously been associated with two similar *metaphors* (“Sodom” and “Egypt”) and identified as *Jerusalem*. In this respect, *solely from a contextual standpoint*, the reference to “that great city” in 17:18 can be understood *only one way* — as a reference to *Jerusalem, to the Jewish people* (cf. Matt. 23:37), previously identified with “Sodom,” “Egypt,” and “Babylon.”

But this verse doesn’t stop with the identification of the woman with “that great city.” Rather, the verse goes on to provide a second means of identification, pinning matters of identification down *beyond any possible question*. The verse continues by adding the words, “which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” A better translation of these words would be, “the one having kingly authority over the kings of the earth” (*ref. Wuest’s Expanded Translation — “which possesses [imperial] power over...”*), limiting matters in the light of Ex. 4:22, 23 *to Israel/to Jerusalem alone.*

And, with this addition, Scripture in this verse has, so to speak, validated the identity of the woman *in the mouth of two witnesses* — something required within the Mosaic Economy (*cf.* Num. 35:30; Deut. 19:15).

(Regarding *Israel in possession of regal authority over the Gentile nations*, note that which Moses was instructed to make known to the Egyptian Pharaoh when God sent him to deliver the Israelites [an Assyrian ruling Egypt, typifying the coming Assyrian who will rule the world (*cf.* Isa. 52:4; Micah 5:5)]. Moses was instructed to say unto Pharaoh:

“Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn...” [Ex. 4:22, 23].

“Sonship” implies *rulership*. Only sons can rule in God’s kingdom [past, present, or future], and in the human realm, only *firstborn sons* can rule [only *firstborn sons* find themselves in a position to exercise the rights of primogeniture within a family, with *regality* being one of these rights]. In short, Moses, announcing to Pharaoh that *Israel was God’s son, even His firstborn*, was an announcement to Pharaoh that *God recognized Israel in the regal capacity among nations implied by sonship*, not Egypt.)

Again, note the latter part of Rev. 17:18. There is *only one nation* on the face of the earth that this can be referencing — the nation which *is not to be “reckoned among the nations”* [Num. 23:9]. *Only one nation* on the face of the earth possesses a position of *regal authority over the kings of the earth [over all the Gentile nations]*. This nation was identified in Ex. 4:22, 23, immediately prior to Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt; and this nation is identified in Rev. 17:18, *after exactly the same fashion* [previously introduced after this fashion in Rev. 12:1], immediately prior to Jesus leading the Israelites out from a worldwide dispersion yet future.

Dating from Moses’ day, Israel has never lost the nation’s standing as *God’s firstborn son*. Israel has been God’s firstborn son since the announcement was made in Ex. 4:22, 23, remains God’s firstborn son today [though a disobedient son, scattered among the nations], and will one day exercise the rights of the firstborn [following repentance].

This is why, for the past 3,500 years, since the time this announcement was made, the one who has held the sceptre since prior to the creation of Adam [Satan]

has done everything within his power to destroy Israel.

(Also, note that Israel is spoken of in both *masculine* and *feminine* respects in Scripture — as *a son*, and as *a woman* [*cf.* Hosea 2:2; 11:1], with both having regal implications. Only *sons* can rule, and man cannot rule alone. *A man* must rule in conjunction with *a woman*, or *a woman* in conjunction with *a man* — *the man as king* and *the woman as consort queen*. This is a principle established in the opening chapter of Genesis, *which can never change* [Gen. 1:26-28].

And exactly the same thing, for exactly the same reasons, is seen relative to *the bride of Christ*. The one who will rule as consort queen with the Son is spoken of in Scripture in both *masculine* and *feminine* respects, with both having regal implications [*cf.* Rom. 8:14, 15, 19; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 5:23-32; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 19:7-10].)

Thus, in the preceding respect, in Revelation chapters eleven through eighteen, the name “Jerusalem” is used *more than one way*. It is used referring to *a literal city* (11:2, 8), and it is also used referring to *the Jewish people* (*e.g.*, “the woman,” “the great whore,” and “the mother of harlots” in chs. 17, 18), referencing the central place in the nation’s own land (17:1, 5, 18; 18:10, 16ff; *cf.* Jer. 44:13; Lam. 1:7, 8, 17; Matt. 23:37).

Further, if Scripture is compared with Scripture, *Jerusalem alone* — referring to *the Jewish people* — is guilty of *the blood of the prophets and of all slain upon the earth* (Matt. 23:34-37), which is said of the harlot in Rev. 18:24. The Jewish people *alone* carry this guilt. *It is not possible* for any other city, nation, or segment of society to be looked upon in this manner. This fact is *clearly stated* in Luke 13:33:

“...it cannot be [*lit.*, ‘...it is not possible’] that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

And it is clear from the subsequent verse (v. 34) that “Jerusalem” is used in verse thirty-three referring to *the entire nation — the Jewish people* — exactly as it is used in Rev. 17:18.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee...”

Thus, according to Scripture, *Israel alone* can be considered guilty of blood in this respect. And in keeping with this thought, Christ died in the

capital of Jewry at the hands of the Jews (Matt. 16:21; Acts 2:23, 36; Rev. 11:8); and the Apostle Paul, as well, was prepared to die at Jerusalem at the hands of the Jews (Acts 21:11-13).

Then, as previously seen, the woman in chapters seventeen and eighteen is also identified as “the one having kingly authority over the kings of the earth” (17:18b). This identifying statement reflects back upon and draws from a similar statement about the woman earlier in the book:

“And there appeared a great wonder [*lit.* ‘sign’] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1b).

“Twelve” is the number of *governmental perfection*. The “sun” and “moon” (along with “stars”) are used in *a metaphorical manner* in the Book of Revelation to describe governmental powers (from a greater [the sun] to lesser powers [the moon, stars; *e.g.*, 6:12; 8:12]); and the matter, as seen in Rev. 12:1, draws from Joseph’s dreams in Genesis chapter thirty-seven (vv. 5-11, 19).

This verse from chapter twelve, seen in its complete fullness, as previously succinctly described, forms part of the contextual foundational material in the book upon which the identity of the woman in 17:18 rests.

The word used for “crown” in the Greek text of Rev. 12:1 is *stephanos*, not *diadema*, indicating that the woman, though possessing regal power and authority, was not exercising that power and authority at the time seen in the text (which is a time yet future, near the middle of the Tribulation).

An individual presently exercising regal power and authority would wear a crown depicted by the word *diadema*, not a crown depicted by the word *stephanos*. This is seen two verses later (v. 3), where the Greek word *diadema* is used — showing an exercise of regal power and authority in the kingdom of Antichrist by the one to whom Satan will one day give “his power, and his seat [‘his throne’], and great authority” (Rev. 13:2).