

Chapter 17:

Verse 1 opens with 1 of the 7 angels coming to John to show him in greater detail what the punishment of Babylon is. When I first started reading Revelation, I was confused about the timing of the fall of Babylon. Part of this was due to how many different chapters the fall of Babylon is mentioned in. It is also described as falling on 2 different occasions. The 1st fall is when the Antichrist and 10 kings come against her. The 2nd fall occurs during the bowl judgements with the wrath of God.

Babylon is described as “sitting by many waters”. The angel explains this to John later in the chapter. We know all the kings of the earth will commit adultery with her. “Adultery” represents turning away from Jesus and enjoying the temporary-selfish pleasures that Babylon will provide, and lead the acceptance in, throughout the world.

The angel continues to show John more detail about Babylon while he is in the spirit. In verse 3 we are seeing the woman, Babylon, with the beast, Antichrist. The blasphemous names, 7 heads and 10 horns are describing the Antichrist and where Babylon sits. Early in the Tribulation, the Antichrist and the city of Babylon will appear to be aligned. But midway in the Tribulation when the Antichrist forces everyone in the world to worship him. Babylon will be forced to change their ways and follow only the Antichrist. The Antichrist and 10 kings will turn on Babylon and destroy anyone in their path.

The woman dressed in purple and scarlet speaks of royalty. Gold, precious stones, and pearls speaks of great wealth. She held a golden cup filled with evil and deeds that go against God. Golden cup could speak of abundance and even a regal level of authority and affluence. The name on her forehead was a mystery. “Mystery” as there will be more to be revealed. In the NIV, on her forehead read “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”. Babylon is going to lead the way deceiving the world and leading the evil religious, political, and social systems that go against God and lead His people to their doom.

In verse 6 it speaks to the woman being drunk with the blood of God’s holy people. This is speaking to the slaughter of countless Christians during the Tribulation. John states that he is confused. The angel asks why and then explains the woman and the beast to him. Verse 8 is referencing the Antichrist and his “supposed” death and resurrection and how most of the world will be fooled by this and see the Antichrist as the messiah.

The 7 heads represent the 7 physical hills on which Babylon will sit. 7 also represents 7 kings, or empires, this being the 7th world empire, revived Roman empire, led by the Antichrist. When the Antichrist appears to die, then come back to life, that would make him the 8th leader of the 7th empire. I believe that is what verse 11 is trying to explain when in the NIV is states: “The beast who once was, now is not, and yet will come.”

The 10 horns represent the 10 rulers, or kings, of the divisions of the world that lead with the Antichrist. The “one hour” states the very short time that they will rule. Their only purpose is to serve the Antichrist and wage war against Christ and Christians.

The angel explains the “sitting by many waters” here to John. The “waters” represent different people, multitudes, nations and languages. So physically this location sounds like it will be surrounded by a lot of different countries. At first Babylon will help lead the way of people rebelling against God. There will eventually come a time when the Antichrist and 10 kings turn against her and take everything from her.

Versus 16-18 are speaking to how the Antichrist and 10 kings turn on Babylon. God puts it in the hearts of these rulers to side with the Antichrist and give their authority to him. The angel is telling John that the woman is Babylon.