

## Study 35: Revelation 17:9-18

**9        "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.**

- The angel declared that wisdom was needed. I would say that wisdom is still needed. But wisdom is not given to understand obscure Bible passages. Wisdom is given to apply to everyday life situations. I have found many people who try to impress with their insight into the Bible, and maybe God has indeed revealed something to them. But I prefer someone with wisdom of how to apply that revelation to how to raise a family, be a good employer or employee or build a strong church.
- I have tried to make a life study of the book of Proverbs, for Proverbs' focus is wisdom. I have prayed for wisdom as James directed in his epistle. When people seek me out for wisdom, I know that is an answer to my prayer. Do you pray for wisdom? Wisdom for what areas of life? Do you study the book of Proverbs to get wisdom?
- The seven hills reference is generally recognized as symbolic of the Roman Empire, for the city of Rome sits on seven hills. That is a real possibility, for that would have meant something to the churches first receiving the Revelation letter. Yet many historic commentators "saw" a reference to the Vatican and the Catholic Church in this verse. This is ridiculous.
- But in an earlier study, we saw how often the number seven (the number of spiritual perfection) is used throughout Revelation. Could the seven represent the "perfection" of the spiritual forces that align themselves against the Church? They seem to always have the "high ground" and loyalty of the ruling powers. The woman, who persecutes the church, seems to have all the power in most nations. The Church appears weak and powerless.

**10       They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.**

- Is anyone else confused here? What does all this represent? If the Bible wanted us to know, it would tell us plainly. Therefore I must conclude that all this is shrouded in mystery for a reason. Let me think of some of the reasons:
  1. If we knew all about the end, we would not have to trust in the Lord.
  2. The morbid and unusual infatuation that many have with the end times is similar to the following for horror movies. The story of Revelation is not one that focuses on the kingdom of darkness, but on the victory of the Lamb.
  3. It doesn't matter who the kings are or aren't. The principle that well organized governments and movements will oppose God and His people. They will all lose and be reduced to nothing.
  4. It isn't important for the Church to understand all that is going on; it is only important that heaven understand and control it all. The angel told John

everything that was going on. That means that heave is in control, not the powers symbolically represented.

**11 The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.**

- This is the key issue: the beast and the kings are going to their destruction. They may persecute the Church and gain control of the governments of the earth, but they are doomed to failure. The Lord reigns.
- Much of this will not make sense until after it all happens, not before. Can you imagine the confusion produced over the three seemingly conflicting prophecies over the Messiah. It was said that He would be from Bethlehem, come out of Egypt and be a Nazarene. Prior to Jesus' life and death, not many would have understood how all that could be true about one man. But today it makes sense. Eventually, the symbolism of Revelation will make sense. Right now, anyone who says they know for sure is promoting their opinion or an educated guess into fact. Maybe they're right, maybe they're wrong.
- The question for you is, "How does this make you feel?" If it stirs up fear, then you must question your interpretation of all this. I read these prophecies and images and return to worship the Lamb. While I am powerless to do anything about these issues, He is all powerful. I am glad my name is in His book!

**12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.**

**13 They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.**

**14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."**

- Thank you, Lord Jesus! The seven, the ten, the beast, and the prostitute are all overcome! And I will be with Him. You will, too! This is not a time for charts and pictures of creatures from the "dark side." This is a time for celebration. The Lamb is victorious and that makes you and me victorious.

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he**

**not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:28-39).**

- God does not keep us from spiritual warfare, but delivers us through and out of spiritual warfare. Revelation shows that warfare is inevitable and so is the victory of the Lamb!

**15 Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.**

- The safest, most reliable interpretation for anything in the Bible is to find what the Bible says about itself. Here the angel told John what the water stands for; it stands for the nations. Don't you think the angel could have said what the other symbols stood for, if he had been directed to do so. He did not, because it is my belief that these symbols—beast, kings, horns, and prostitute—are to be seen as themes throughout history and not any one person or philosophy.
- I have been to 33 nations in my life and I have seen the masses of people going about their daily lives; many of them don't know God. They are just trying to live day to day or they are enslaved to one of the religious antichristian sects. The antichristian world system has them in its grips and won't let go of them, not without a fight.
- But the fight is not natural, but spiritual, for all of life's problems have their roots in the spiritual. So you and I must fight a spiritual battle, which has natural implications.

**For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).**

**16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.**

**17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled.**

- “God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose.” What a wonderful phrase. Throughout history, God has accomplished His purpose by using even those who don’t acknowledge His existence.
- How many instances similar to the one described in verse 17 can you think of?
  1. Samson -- “His father and mother replied, ‘Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?’ But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me. She’s the right one for me.’ **(His parents did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)**” (Judges 14:3-4).
  2. Proverbs – “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse **wherever he pleases**” (Proverbs 21:1).
  3. Caiaphas – “Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’ **He did not say this on his own**, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one” (John 11:49-52).
- How many more examples can you come up with?

**18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”**

- Here the angel identifies the woman as the great city. What is the great city? If there is a city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, it makes sense that there is a city of Satan, a heavenly entity where the government and power of Satan is concentrated. St. Augustine alluded to this in his classic work, *City of God*.
- Once again we see that the woman is symbolic of something else. That is the means of communication in the book of Revelation. Therefore to choose some of these symbols and interpret them as literal beings or specific events is not biblical, unless the Bible does so itself. You are on much safer and peaceful ground if you see this book as a cosmic play that has fictional characters who represent principles, trends and themes.
- Most importantly, you must not let any interpretation of Revelation take away from the Lamb’s victory in any way. I am at rest with the events of the past and present because Jesus is in control and will emerge victorious, over ever –ism and force that is against Him.