

# **Dr. David L. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 23, Revelation 17:7-18:8--Beast and Fall of Babylon 6-Min. Video Overview**

Sponsored by [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, let's jump right in. Today, we're going to try and decode one of the most baffling, most intense visions in all of ancient literature. I'm talking about the fall of Babylon the Great from the book of Revelation.

Now, I know it's a vision just packed with strange symbols, but the good news is, thanks to scholars like Dr. Dave Mathewson, we can actually unlock what it all means. So these are the first words an angel says to the prophet John. And you've got to picture the scene.

John is completely floored by what he's seeing, just dumbfounded. It's a mix of awe and fear, and maybe even a little bit of a weird fascination. The angel basically says, hey, why are you so shocked? I'm going to explain the whole thing to you.

And that's exactly what we're going to do. Follow that step-by-step breakdown. So this is the image at the heart of it all.

You have this woman dressed to the nines, dripping with jewels, and she represents a great city. And she's riding this absolutely monstrous seven-headed beast. It's such a powerful and bizarre image, right? The key to understanding the whole thing is to figure out who these two are: the beast and the woman, Babylon.

Okay, so let's start with the beast. The very first major clue to its identity is kind of hidden in its title. It's a name that is a direct and completely intentional mockery of God.

Just look at this side-by-side. It's wild. On one hand, you have God's title, which speaks to this eternal presence and ultimate salvation.

And on the other, the beast's title is this twisted demonic parody. According to Dr. Mathewson's work, that little phrase is not a reference to its fatal wound. It's already been defeated.

And it's coming? That's not some glorious return. It's just one last appearance before it gets completely destroyed. So what we're looking at here is a counterfeit power on a very, very short leash.

But here's the thing. This vision isn't just some abstract idea. The beast's features, like its seven heads, are super specific symbols.

They point directly to a real-world empire that the original audience would have recognized in a heartbeat. This is just a brilliant piece of ancient symbolism. The seven heads have this slick double meaning.

First, they're the seven hills of Rome. That was like a famous nickname for the city. Everyone knew it.

And second, they're seven kings. So this connects the beast not just to a place, but to the political power that ran that place, the Roman Empire and its whole line of emperors. Now, this is a fantastic question.

And honestly, it's where a lot of people get tangled up. I mean, for centuries, people have been trying to line up Roman emperors with this vision to pinpoint the exact date. But is that really the point of what's being said here? Well, the scholarly consensus is pretty clear.

Nope. The number seven in this book is almost always symbolic. It stands for completeness, totality, the whole shebang.

So the vision isn't some historical whodunit about identifying seven specific guys. It's a critique of the entire system of Roman rule. The message is that this empire, which seemed all-powerful and eternal, has a beginning, a middle, and this is the crucial part, an end.

Its time is definitely limited. And let's be real. Rome wasn't doing this alone.

The ten horns on the beast, just like the seven heads, represent another complete number. They symbolize all the allied kingdoms, all the puppet states, all the nations tangled up in Rome's giant political and economic machine. You've got to think of it like a corrupt global system with everyone propping each other up, all of them in league with the beast.

Okay, so if the beast is the Roman Empire and its whole network of power, why is the woman riding it called Babylon? And what in the world did this system do that was so bad it guaranteed its own destruction? Well, the text basically hands us a charge sheet. This system called Babylon is condemned for luring nations into an economic system that's built on just pure greed and absolutely obscene luxury. It was violent against anyone who dared to stand up to it.

And maybe worst of all was its arrogant self-glorification, acting like it was God, claiming a power that belongs to no human empire. I mean, nothing captures that arrogance better than this boast right here. I sit as queen.

Wow. That is a declaration of eternal, untouchable power. The empire literally sees itself as divine, as permanent, as completely immune to any consequences.

This is a direct in-your-face challenge to God's authority. And when the text talks about excessive luxury, it's not being vague. It gives us a literal cargo manifest of Rome's global trade.

The list just goes on and on. Gold, spices, fine silks. But it ends with the most chilling cargo of all: bodies and souls of men.

It's a crystal-clear reference to the slave trade that was the engine of the empire's whole economy. So with a list of charges like that, judgment was pretty much guaranteed, right? But what's so fascinating is that the vision doesn't even show us the destruction. It just skips

right past it and focuses on the aftermath, on the shockwaves that ripple across the world when this supposedly eternal city just collapses.

The fall is just announced, suddenly, like it's already a done deal. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. And what comes next is basically a series of funeral songs or laments from all the people who had built their entire fortunes and their power on this corrupt system.

First, we hear from political allies, you know, the kings. They're standing way off in the distance, totally terrified, just watching the smoke rise. And their reaction is one of complete and utter shock.

How could this city of power be destroyed so fast in one hour? Their entire world order just went up in smoke. And then we hear from the merchants, the captains of global commerce. And what they say is, it's just so revealing.

They aren't crying for the people who died. They're not sorry for their own sins. Nope.

They are weeping because, and this is a direct quote, no one buys their cargo anymore. They are mourning their lost profits. It's the perfect illustration of how a system built entirely on greed will, in the end, absolutely destroy itself.

So here's the crucial takeaway, the main point of all this. The vision of Babylon is a timeless warning about a certain kind of power. According to this text, any system, any empire, any nation that becomes arrogant, that uses violence to get its way, and that's all about limitless consumption, well, it's just setting itself up for a massive fall.

It literally contains the seeds of its own destruction. Right in the middle of all this chaos, a voice from heaven shouts out this critical command, come out of her, my people. Now, Dr. Mathewson points out that this isn't a call to physically pack up and leave.

I mean, how could you? The Roman Empire was everywhere. This is a spiritual call, an ethical one. It's saying, refuse to compromise with this system, refuse to participate in its corrupt economics and its twisted values so you don't end up sharing its fate.

And that leaves us with a final, pretty provocative thought, doesn't it? If Babylon is a symbol for any powerful, corrupt system, what does that look like in our world today? It's a heavy question, but it's one this ancient vision forces every generation, including ours, to ask. Thanks for digging into this with us.