

Is Babylon the Papacy in the Book of Revelation?

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Introduction

One of the widely misunderstood symbols in the book of Revelation is that of Babylon, portrayed in the book both as the Great City and the Prostitute/Harlot/Whore.¹ Many preterist interpreters believe that Babylon represents the pagan Roman empire in the time of John.² Other preterists teach that the Harlot is old Jerusalem.³ Many futurists believe

¹ For the sake of consistency, this paper will henceforth refer to the Harlot. Symbols in prophecy, which represent something else, will be capitalized for the sake of convention.

² This is typical of preterist interpretation, which is widespread in the literature, though not all who subscribe to this view would claim to be preterists. This most common interpretation is represented by J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL, and Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 200: “The prophecy was intended as an oracle against Imperial Rome.” See also David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52C (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 936; Jonathan Knight, *Revelation*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 115; J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010), 126; Susan Fournier Mathews, *The Book of Revelation: Question by Question* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 181; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 311, 315; Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 220-25; John R. Yeatts, *Revelation*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 311-17, 323, 330-31, 336-38, 345-47.

³ Josephine Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 38 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 283-86, argues based on evidence from the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls that it was the wicked priesthood in Jerusalem that was referred to as Babylon by John (the Baptist) in Revelation. Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated: A Parallel*

that Babylon may have derived its imagery from the ancient Roman power but it represents some corrupt future power that will produce the eschatological Antichrist.⁴ Idealist interpreters of Revelation have a variety of views regarding Babylon, but most tend to view Babylon as representative of a corrupt world system.⁵ Many historicists, including not only most of the Reformers but also many Adventist scholars and interpreters of Revelation, believe that Babylon represents papal Rome.⁶ A number of other scholars view Babylon as representing a broader image than merely pagan or papal Rome, encompassing the sweep of

Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 402, identifies a number of other scholars who consider Babylon to be old Jerusalem, including, J. Stewart Russell, David Chilton, Philip Carrington, and Milton S. Terry. To this list Andrew M. Woods, "Have the Prophecies in Revelation 17-18 about Babylon Been Fulfilled? Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169 (2012): 79-80, adds the names of Joseph Balyeat, Don Preston, Kenneth Gentry, Scott Hahn, Hank Hanegraaff, R. C. Sproul, and N. T. Wright.

⁴ This is typical of futurist interpretation, widespread among Evangelicals, represented by John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1966). After identifying the Roman Catholic Church as best meeting the characteristics of the harlot historically, he goes on to insist that "the inference is that this is a future situation which will take place in the end time," and that it will be an apostate world church: "The only form of a world church recognized in the Bible is this apostate world church destined to come into power after the true church has been raptured" (245). Compare Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 82-87; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 221-34.

⁵ John Guimond, *The Silencing of Babylon: A Spiritual Commentary on the Revelation of John* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1991), 90, calls Babylon "worldly power." William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1967), 202, says, "Babylon, then, is the world as center of seduction at any moment of history; particularly during this entire present dispensation." Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England, and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 161, declares that Babylon represents "godless society, the world." Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, *New International Biblical Commentary*, vol. 18, *New Testament Series* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995; Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1995), 203, says, "Babylon is actually the 'global village' of godless power, which determines daily life for every person at any time in human history."

⁶ Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 170-75; Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons, or the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife* (New York, NY: Loizeaux Bros., 1943), 282-90; LaRondelle, "Babylon," 170-71; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares, vol. 2: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 477; C. Marvin Pate, *Reading Revelation: A Comparison of Four Interpretive Translations of the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2009), 9; Reimar Vetne, *Jesus in the Book of Revelation* (Ulefoss, Norway: Bibloy Press, 2016), 107-111.

human history.⁷

These diverse views cannot all be correct. The question is what the Bible teaches about Babylon, and particularly what is taught in the book of Revelation. The purpose of this paper is to explore this issue and determine from the text of Revelation what Babylon represents if a consistent and careful interpretation is followed. We begin with an overview of the two sides in the great conflict in Revelation, in which Babylon plays a significant role.

The Great Conflict in the Book of Revelation

There are two major powers in conflict in the book of Revelation. They are set forth in the heart of the book, in Revelation 12. The conflict begins in heaven, with a war between Michael (the pre-incarnate Son of God)⁸ with His angels and the devil (Satan, the Dragon) with his angels

⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 629, says that Babylon “symbolizes seductive Rome and all self-centered empires of history, including our own.” Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1987; reprint, n.p.: C. C. Cook, 1900), 387, states that “as the pure Woman is made up of the whole congregation of the faithful from the beginning, so must this great Harlot be made up of all the faithless from the beginning.” Because she is the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, her existence must “date back to, and above all include, the great harlotries and abominations which preceded both the Popes and the Roman emperors” (388). Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 431, declares, “‘Babylon’ represents satanic institutions throughout history which have espoused corrupt religious, moral and economic values.” See also G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999; Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1999), 884-87; Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 13:739-40; Hans K. LaRondelle, “Babylon: Anti-Christian Empire,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 161-62; Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 239; J. R. Zurcher, *Christ of the Revelation: His Message to the Church and to the World*, transl. E. E. White (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1980), 92-95.

⁸ In Scripture, Michael (“Who is like God?” or substantively, as a name, “the One who is like God”) appears a number of times in both Old and New Testaments. In Dan 10:13, Michael is one of the chief/first/primary (מִשְׁרָפִים) rulers (שָׂרִים) above Gabriel, who was sent to Daniel to give him an interpretation of what his vision was about. In Dan 10:21, Gabriel, the most powerful of the angels, admits that he was unable by himself to stand against the rulers (שָׂרִים) of Persia and Greece, but he had to secure the aid of

(12:7-9). The devil lost the war and was cast out of heaven to this earth along with his angels (cf. 12:4). The conflict was carried to this earth, as the rest of chapter 12 recounts, with allusions to the Fall in Gen 3, and with the Dragon being identified in 12:9 as “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world.”⁹ It stands before the Woman in 12:4 as she is about to give birth, ready to devour her Child as soon as He was born. This seems to be a clear allusion to Gen 3:15, where the promised Offspring of the Woman is to enter into conflict with the Serpent, and the head of the Serpent will be crushed even as it inflicts a wound on the heel of the Woman’s Offspring. Certainly, the descriptive phrase “who is going to rule all nations with an iron rod” (Rev 12:5) is a clear allusion to Ps 2:9 (cf. Rev 2:26-28) and points to the Messiah, who is the Son of God (Ps 2:2,7) and who will eventually sit in judgment on the nations and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps 2:6,8,10-12; cf. Rev 19:15-16).

The devil loses this conflict at every point of the story in Rev 12. In 12:5, the male Child “was caught up to God and to His throne.” Satan was unable to prevent the success of His mission to earth. In 12:10, in an allusion to Christ’s victory at the cross, heaven declares, “The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down.”¹⁰ Further, those whom he accused “conquered him by the blood

someone more powerful, namely, Michael, whom Gabriel calls, “your ruler,” that is, Daniel’s ruler (רֹאשׁ). This can be none other than the pre-incarnate Christ, the Son of God. In fact, in Dan 9:26 Gabriel interprets Daniel’s vision with reference to the coming of an Anointed One, the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ), who is also called a ruler/prince/chief (נָגִיד). In Dan 12:1, Michael is the great Ruler (רֹאשׁ) who takes His stand for the children of Daniel’s people and initiates the end of history and the deliverance of God’s people. This parallels to some degree the actions of the Archangel in 1 Thess 4:16, who is the Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, who comes to awake the sleeping saints and bring to be with Him all who await His appearing. Finally, in Jude 9, we find Michael the Archangel contending with the devil over the body of Moses, whom He is about to resurrect, and He does not argue with the devil or accuse him but merely declares, “The Lord rebuke you!”—as He (the Angel of Yahweh, who is also Yahweh Himself) did also with regard to Satan’s accusations against Joshua the high priest in Zech 3:1-2. Biblical evidence points to Michael as being the pre-incarnate Son of God.

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

¹⁰ This is an allusion to a second, final casting out of Satan from heaven, which took place at Christ’s crucifixion (cf. Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Rev 12:13;

of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (12:11). From the time of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, and His enthronement at the right hand of His Father,¹¹ Satan knew that he was a defeated foe and that he had but a short time left (12:12) to do his work of deception and destruction. Therefore, he was very angry and went off to persecute the Woman who had given birth to the male Child (12:12-13).¹² But God protected the Woman (12:6, 14-16), and the Dragon/Serpent/devil was unable to annihilate her, as he attempted to do. So, he became “furious with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus Christ” (12:17). Revelation reveals that they too, though persecuted, will finally prevail and will end up in the Holy City, New Jerusalem (3:12; 21:24-27; 22:14), while the devil and his allies end up in the lake of fire that consumes them (20:10,15).

The Dragon with Seven Heads and Ten Horns

Satan, the Dragon, is revealed in Rev 12:3 to operate on earth through earthly powers represented by seven Heads and Ten Horns. These are his agents to accomplish his work of deception and destruction (17:9-10, 12). The agent in view in Rev 12:5 was pagan Rome, through which Satan attempted to destroy the male Child. The agent in 12:14-16 was still Rome, although the power shifted from pagan Rome to papal Rome (cf. Dan 8:9-12, 23-25), leading to the Holy Roman Empire, in which the pope crowned the kings and emperors, conferring on them divine authority to rule. This resulted in a union of church and state in which the state carried out the demands of the church, even to enforcing the search for and punishment of heretics, most notably under the

Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publ. Assn., 1870, 1877, 1878, 1884), 3:183-84.

¹¹ Rev 12:5 says that the male Child was “caught up to God and to His throne.” Jesus’ ascent to God’s right hand is taught in Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; 16:19; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20-21; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21.

¹² The Woman is a symbol of the church, the corporate people of God in both Testaments, His covenant people whom He loves and seeks to redeem for Himself (Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 274-75. The male Child “is going to rule all nations with an iron rod” (Rev 12:5), pointing to the Messiah, God’s Son, who will execute justice in the earth (Ps 2:2, 6-9; Rev 2:26-27; 19:15).

Inquisition.¹³ This papal Roman agent is seen again in the image of the Beast from the Sea (13:1-8), a further elaboration of the nature and activities of the power at work in 12:14-16.

Satan's agent in 12:17 is probably best understood to be the same power described in 13:11-17 as the Beast from the Earth, the new world superpower that acts with all the authority of the first Beast—and in its presence, after its mortal wound has been healed (13:12,14). Based on the timing of this power and its superpower status, able to cause the whole world to do its bidding, along with its rise from the earth (as compared with the sea, a fairly desolate, relatively unpopulated place—cf. 12:14-16; 17:15) and its nature—docile at first (with its two non-threatening horns like those of a lamb) but later speaking like a dragon—this political power may reasonably be deduced to represent the United States of America.¹⁴

In Revelation 17, we gain a more complete picture of the Dragon, where it is viewed as a scarlet-colored Beast with seven Heads and Ten Horns.¹⁵ The angel's interpretation to John declares that the seven Heads represent seven kings which rule consecutively—five have fallen, one is currently active, and one still lies in the future (v. 10). They are also represented as seven Mountains, on which the Harlot Babylon sits (v. 9).¹⁶ Verse 18 represents the Harlot as reigning over the kings (or

¹³ C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Mark of the Beast," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 71-72.

¹⁴ T. E. Andrews and T. Z. Andrews, *Studies in Revelation: An Exposition of Chapters 12 & 17* (College Place, WA: Walla Walla College Print, 1902), 21-22; Lawrence M. Nelson, *The Antichrist* (Middleton, ID: CHJ Publishing, 1996), 88-89; Edwin Reynolds, "The Seven-headed Beast of Revelation 17," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 6 (2003):99-106; Vetne, 112.

¹⁵ For the arguments for this conclusion, see Ekkehardt Müller, "The Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion (Part I)," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10.1 (2007): 37-50; Reynolds, "Seven-headed Beast," 101-3. Unlike the seven Heads, which are seven separate world powers ruling consecutively and represented, in part at least, by separate beasts in Dan 7, the Ten Horns are a confederacy of lesser powers that always rule together contemporaneously and are viewed as a unit in Revelation. As a singular confederacy, the Ten Horns are capitalized as a single entity.

¹⁶ Many commentators read this as "seven hills," assuming an allusion to the seven hills of Rome. However, a search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graece* for references to the seven hills of Rome consistently turned up no references to seven mountains (ὄρη), as in Rev 17:9, but only to seven hills (βουνοί) (cf. Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1983; San Diego, CA: Creation-Life, 1983), 336. Alan Johnson, 741,

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kingdoms, as in Dan 2:38-41, 44; 7:17, 23-24; 8:20-22) of the earth; that is, her sitting on the seven Heads/Mountains/kings/kingdoms represents her reign—or rule—over them, just as her sitting on many waters in Rev 17:1 represents her reigning over the peoples, nations, and kings of earth (v. 15).

The Ten Horns, John is informed in verse 12, are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet—in John’s day—but will rule contemporaneously in John’s future as a confederacy of nations that work together without becoming one—much like the feet and (ten) toes of the image in Dan 2:41-43 cannot adhere to one another any more than iron mixed with clay. These Ten Horns/kings would seem to be somewhat contemporaneous also with the Little Horn in Dan 7:7-8, since they arise from the fourth (Roman) Beast and exist prior to the Little Horn power but—all except the three which the Little Horn uprooted—continue after it, like the feet and toes of Dan 2, until the end, when Christ destroys the kingdoms of this earth and sets up His eternal kingdom (Dan 2:34-35, 44-45; cf. Rev 11:15).¹⁷ At that time, according

points out that “whenever divine wisdom is called for, the description requires theological and symbolical discernment, not mere geographical or numerical insight.” He notes also that “in the seven other instances of the word *orē* in Revelation, it is always rendered ‘mountain,’” and that in the Prophets (e.g., Isa 2:2; Jer 51:25; Dan 2:35; Zech 4:7), mountains represent world powers (742). “The expression ‘they are also seven kings’ (v. 10) seems to require strict identification of the seven mountains with seven kings rather than with a geographic location” (ibid.). See also Seiss, 391-92; Kenneth A. Strand, “The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors?” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 186; Walvoord, 250-54; and Woods, 95-100. Although Hughes, 185, argues against the seven mountains representing the seven hills of Rome, he takes the number seven as symbolic of divine authority, signifying “the desire of the empire-builders of this fallen world to dethrone God and to exercise authority that is universal and absolute.” However, the text does not allow for a symbolic interpretation, for they are seven kings, of which “five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain for only a little while” (17:10). This is clearly a historicist interpretation given to John by the interpreting angel.

¹⁷ Ekkehardt Müller, “The Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion (Part II),” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10.2 (2007): 168-71, admits that it is generally acknowledged that the Ten Horns allude to Dan 7:7-8, 20, 24, but he struggles with the fact that in Dan 7, three of the ten were plucked up, whereas in Rev 17, the ten are not reduced to seven nor are they subdivided. He concludes only that “the ten kings reign simultaneously and stand for political powers opposed to Jesus” (171). However, John’s reference is clearly to the same Ten Horns already seen in Rev 12 and are shown crowned in Rev 13:1, an allusion to the Ten Horns (as a group) in Dan 7. Had he referenced only seven horns, the allusion to Dan 7 would have been confusing in establishing the timing of the rise of the

to Rev 17:12-14, the Ten Horns conspire with the Scarlet Beast, who has become an eighth ruler in the eschatological period following the rule of the seven Heads (v. 11), to give their power and authority to the Scarlet Beast, the Dragon, to make war with the Lamb and His followers. But the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings (v. 14).¹⁸

Babylon versus the Heads and Horns of the Scarlet Beast

What is significant about the description given in Rev 17 is the distinction made between Babylon, the Great City represented as a Harlot sitting on the Heads of the Scarlet Beast, and the Heads and Horns themselves. The Heads and Horns are powers/kings/kingdoms of earth that are used by the Scarlet Beast as his earthly agents to accomplish his purposes of making war on Christ and His followers, whereas Babylon is portrayed as a corrupting influence, a Harlot, who reigns over, or exercises her dominance over, all of these earthly powers (17:18). There is therefore no justifiable way to equate Babylon with any one of the earthly powers represented by the Heads and the Horns.¹⁹

Babylon is greater and more extensive than all of those earthly powers, being coextensive with Satan's reign on earth. Her reign extends from the first to the last of all of those powers, that is, throughout most of human history. In fact, in Rev 18:24, Babylon is held responsible for "the blood of prophets and saints, and of all those slaughtered on the earth." That would include even the blood of Abel. The spirit of Babylon was

Beast from the Sea in Rev 13, since the Little Horn in Dan 7 rose up before the three horns had been plucked up by it. It arose during the time of the Ten Horns.

¹⁸ This is a parallel with the battle of the great day of God Almighty in Rev 16:14 that actually takes place under the seventh bowl plague, of which Rev 17-18 is an elaboration. It is parallel also to the battle against the Rider on the white horse and His armies described in 19:19.

¹⁹ Seiss, 393, long ago recognized the untenableness of such a conclusion. Referring to Rev 17:9-10, he wrote, "But, to say that the Romish Papacy was thus carried, nurtured, and sustained by the ancient empires of Greek Persia, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, would be a great lie on history. It was not so. In the nature of things, it could not be so. By no means, then, can this Harlot be the Papacy alone, as maintained by all 'respectable interpreters.' Furthermore, it is a matter of fact, that as surely as Rome in John's day, and Greece, Persia, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, before Rome, existed and bore sway on earth as regal mountains, so surely and conspicuously were they each and all ridden by this great Harlot. They were each and all the lovers, supporters, and defenders of organized falsehood in religion, the patrons of idolatry, the foster friends of all manner of spiritual harlotry." The papacy can be no more than a pawn of the great Harlot, an earthly power used for the purposes of the Dragon, whose spirit the Harlot embodies.

already there in the heart of Cain when he rejected the requirement of God and became so angry at God's rejection of his offering that he slew his brother, Abel, whose offering God had accepted (Gen 4:3-11). The spirit of Babylon was there throughout history whenever the powers of earth took action to reject the God of heaven and to oppress and kill His faithful followers. Babylon will continue its oppressive rule until its final collapse under the seventh bowl plague (Rev 16:19), of which Rev 17-18 is an elaboration or fuller description (see 17:16-17).²⁰

The Papacy in the Book of Revelation

The papacy appears most clearly in the book of Revelation in chapter 13, where it is represented by the Beast from the Sea.²¹ The language of the text makes a variety of literary and content connections with the Little Horn power of Daniel 7 and 8.²² The seven Heads and Ten Horns (v. 1) is one of those connections to Daniel's prophecy. The mention of the Leopard, the Bear, and the Lion (v. 2) is another.²³ Its war against the saints for 42 months/1260 days/a time, times, and half a time (v. 5; cf. 12:6, 14; Dan 7:25) is yet another. The nature of that power—blaspheming God, His name, His tabernacle or dwelling place, and those who have their dwelling in heaven (v. 6)—is still another. The fact that it appears outwardly to look somewhat like the Dragon of Rev 12 should not be too surprising, since the Dragon gives it its power, its (civil) seat or throne, and great authority (13:2), and when people worship the Beast, they are said to be worshiping the Dragon because it gave its authority to

²⁰ Johnson, 736-37; LaRondelle, "Babylon," 174; idem, *End-Time Prophecies*, 396-97; Reynolds, 102; Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 2d ed. (Naples, FL: Ann Arbor, 1979), 49; Louis F. Were, *The Woman and the Beast in the Book of Revelation: Studies in Revelation 12-20* (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1983), 86-87.

²¹ Johann Heinz, "The Modern Papacy: Claims and Authority," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 339-340; William G. Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 23-26; LaRondelle, "Babylon," 165-172; Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 69-72.

²² Heinz, 339, declares, "The beast in Revelation 13:1-10 is identical with the little horn in Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 as well."

²³ Johnsson, 23.

the Beast (13:4). In other words, they are worshiping the power and authority behind the throne, which is that of the Dragon (Satan).

In fact, a careful study of the language of the text reveals that the Beast from the Sea is actually one of the Heads of the Dragon, doing the Dragon's work on the earth. Rev 13:3 points out that "one of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed." Verse 2 states that "the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority," with the antecedent of "his"²⁴ being the Dragon. So, when verse 3 says that "one of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded," the antecedent still seems to be the Dragon. One of the Dragon's Heads was wounded, and that Head was the power represented by the Beast from the Sea, which mimics the Dragon but is not the Dragon.²⁵ Later, in 13:12 and 13:14, the text speaks of "the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed" and "the beast who had the sword wound and yet lived," not the head of the Beast that was wounded. The Beast itself, one of the seven Heads of the Dragon, was wounded, not one of the seven heads of the Beast from the Sea. There is no emphasis in the text on the seven heads of the Beast from the Sea, as though they represent separate powers or kings/kingdoms working as agents of the Beast from the Sea. They appear to only mimic the appearance of the Dragon and have no individual symbolic value. It is the Beast itself that acts, not its seven heads. In 13:1, the only place that mentions the seven heads of this Beast, it is the Ten Horns that are mentioned first and receive attention as being crowned. The only purpose of that mention is to show the timing of the rise of the Beast, equating it with the period of the Ten Horns of Dan 7, during which the Little Horn power would arise, pulling up three of the Horns as it grew to full power (Dan 7:8,24).²⁶

The papacy has, at least since the time of the Reformation, been held by many to be represented by the Little Horn of Daniel and by the Beast from the Sea in Rev 13.²⁷ So significant was this interpretation that Jesuit scholars Francisco Ribera and Luis de Alcasar in the sixteenth century proposed, respectively, the futurist and preterist methods of interpreting Revelation for the sole purpose of trying to avoid the historicist interpretation, which pointed to the papacy as the corrupt and

²⁴ Several versions use the neuter "its," which is also a legitimate translation of αὐτοῦ. The antecedent is the Dragon in any case. In Greek, δράκων is masculine, but in English it is neuter.

²⁵ LaRondelle, "Babylon," 171-72.

²⁶ Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 73.

²⁷ LaRondelle, "Babylon," 165-66; Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 122.

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blasphemous power described in Revelation.²⁸ The papal Roman power has met the various specifications of these prophecies to a very remarkable degree, not only in character but also in timing and in activities. It seems reasonable from a recapitulationist historicist perspective²⁹ that Daniel's Little Horn power and Revelation's Beast from the Sea do represent the papal power which ruled Western Europe for 1260 years, from the time Justinian handed over power to the bishop of Rome in A.D. 538 until Napoleon's General Berthier took the pope into captivity in 1798.³⁰ This seemingly fatal wound has since been fully healed, as prophesied in Rev 13:3, 12, 14, and current events reveal the resurgence of the papal power today in preparation for the final events described in 13:11-17 with the support of the Beast from the Earth.³¹

The Papacy Distinguished from Babylon

If the Beast from the Sea is one of the seven Heads on the Dragon or Scarlet Beast and represents the papal Roman power, it cannot also be Babylon, since Babylon sits on the seven Heads (Rev 17:9), representing its rulership over the heads, namely, the kings or kingdoms of the earth that are represented by the Heads/Mountains (17:18). It remains to delineate the seven Heads of the Dragon/Scarlet Beast from Scripture and to note the distinctions between the papacy and Babylon.

We begin from the explanation given by the angelic interpreter to John in Rev 17:9-10: "This calls for a mind that has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also

²⁸ Oral Edmond Collins, *The Final Prophecy of Jesus: An Introduction, Analysis, and Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 8.

²⁹ Revelation follows the pattern of the book of Daniel in laying out in several somewhat parallel visions a series of events that would take place between the prophet's day and the second coming of Christ. We refer to this method of interpreting apocalyptic visions as recapitulationist historicism. It seems well justified by the fact that each of Revelation's major visions from Rev 4-14 is primarily historical, during probationary time, but ends with the return of Christ. The visions of Rev 15-22 are eschatological in nature, with events following the close of probation. Rev 1:1, 3 suggest that events began in John's day, while 22:7, 12, 20 point to Christ's soon return. See Ekkehardt Mueller, "Recapitulation in Revelation 4-11," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9, nos. 1-2 (1998): 260-77; cf. Jon Paulien, "The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic—Part Two," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 187-207.

³⁰ Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 76-77, 121-22; cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 266, 439.

³¹ Heinz, 338-69; Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2:346.

seven kings: Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain for only a little while.” When the angel says to John that five have fallen, he uses a perfective aorist, signifying that their fall was in the past and they remain in their fallen condition in John’s day. In other words, five of the seven kingdoms are already ancient history by the late first century A.D., when John is receiving the explanation. One of the kingdoms is active and ruling in John’s day, namely the Roman Empire. And one kingdom is yet to arise in John’s distant future, and it will remain for only a relatively brief time before the return of Christ brings in the end of world kingdoms (cf. Dan 2:44; Rev 11:15).

The great kingdoms spoken of in prophecy were those kingdoms that had oppressive relationships with God’s covenant people, first in ancient Israel, then later with the faithful people of God in the Christian church.³² The first such major world power was ancient Egypt, which sought to oppress God’s people, the children of Israel, and even to annihilate them (Exod 1:8-16; 14:5-12). The second was Assyria (Isa 52:4), which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and all of the fortified cities of Judah except Jerusalem, and it took the people of Israel into captivity and distributed them through the lands of the north and replaced them in Israel (also called Samaria) with heathen people from the north (2 Kgs 17:3-6,18-24;18:9-13). The third was Babylonia, which under Nebuchadnezzar took Judah into captivity, destroyed Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, killed their fit young men, deported those who escaped the sword, and also destroyed the temple and took the valuables from the temple to Babylon to use for pagan worship (2 Chron 36:17-21; Dan 1:1-2). The prophecies of Daniel pick up at this point, with Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian empire being represented by the Head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Babylon was also represented by the Lion in Daniel’s dream in Dan 7. But God prophesied the rise of other world kingdoms after Babylon that would continue to behave in similar fashion.

After Babylon, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians took power (Dan 5:30-31; 6:28). Daniel’s next vision took place at the end of the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon (8:1), and it began with a prophecy of the rise of two kingdoms represented respectively by a Ram

³² Kenneth A. Strand, “The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors?” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 205-6.

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and a male Goat. The former, according to the interpretation of Gabriel, represented the combined kingdom of Media and Persia (or Medo-Persia), followed by the latter, the kingdom of Grecia (8:20-21). These were parallel, respectively, to the Breast and Arms of silver and the Belly and Thighs of brass (or bronze) in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. They were also parallel to the Bear and the Leopard in Daniel's first vision in chapter 7. Medo-Persia tried to destroy the Jews under Ahasuerus (Xerxes) through the influence of Haman the Agagite (Esth 3:5-13).

After Alexander the Great conquered the Persian armies of Darius III, Grecia ruled the world (Dan 11:1-4; 1 Macc 1:1-4). But Alexander died young and his kingdom was divided (Dan 8:8, 21-22; 1 Macc 1:5-9). The Ptolemies ruled Palestine for a time, then the Seleucids won Palestine for themselves. Under the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Jewish religion was declared illegal, the temple was profaned, and the Jews were forcibly Hellenized or were killed (1 Macc 1:10,20-64). The Maccabean rebellion led to about a century of independence for Judea under the Hasmonean kings, but this independence was short-lived.

Grecia was followed by the iron kingdom of Rome (Dan 2:49; 7:7, 19), which defeated the Greeks in the Macedonian Wars and defeated Carthage in 146 B.C. In 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey defeated Jerusalem and placed Palestine under Roman control. The Roman empire was established under Caesar Augustus (Octavian) in 27 B.C. This is the empire that was ruling at the time of John's revelation on Patmos, about 95 A.D. This empire would be the sixth Head on the Dragon. The five which had fallen would be, starting from the beginning, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Grecia.³³

It is important at this point to consider the Ten Horns. In Dan 7, the Ten Horns appear on the fourth Beast, the great and terrible Beast with the iron teeth and claws, which tramples the whole earth. After the Ten Horns appear, the Little Horn arises and pulls up three of the Horns as it asserts its power and becomes great, with the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking proud words and blasphemies (Dan 7:24-25). This power is seen again, as we have shown above, in the Beast from the Sea in Rev 13. In Rev 17, the Ten Horns will appear yet again in the distant future, from John's historical perspective, strongly suggesting a lengthy rule for Rome before the rise of the Ten Horns (cf. Dan 8:23-26). Strong parallels between the Little Horn of Dan 7 and the Little Horn of Dan 8 suggest

³³ Müller, "Part II," 165; Seiss, 393; cf. Strand, "Seven Heads," 186-87, 205.

that it is the same power but portrayed in a different setting, particularly from a sanctuary perspective. In both cases, the Little Horn continues until its judgment, which is contemporaneous with the vindication and reward of the saints at the end of the pre-advent judgment (Dan 7:26-27; 8:13-14,25-26), much as the feet and toes of the image in Dan 2 continued until the end of history and the setting up of Christ's eternal kingdom. All of this suggests that the Ten Horns and the Little Horn are a continuation of the power of Rome in the Western world. That makes the Little Horn, which is also the Beast from the Sea in Rev 13, a part of the sixth Head, representing Rome. We should see the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire as an extension of the power of Rome, since it was Justinian I, the Roman emperor from 527-565, who appointed the bishops and popes, determined orthodox theology and ruled the church until he had conquered the Germanic tribes that were attempting to control Rome and impose their Arian theology on the fallen Western empire. After restoring Nicene orthodoxy in the West, in 538 he relinquished control to a praetorian prefect and to Vigilius the bishop of Rome, considered to be the first Byzantine pope.³⁴ With the help of the Franks, who had converted to Catholicism under Clovis I and brought the individual tribes together under one king, the pope brought Western Rome under the control of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁵ The bishop of Rome, who came to be known as the Holy Father (*el papa*, the pope), ultimately used the forged document, "The Donation of Constantine," to establish his right to rule over all civil authorities.³⁶ This led to the founding of the Holy Roman Empire, with the pope as the true sovereign

³⁴ Keum Young Ahn, Gerard Damsteegt, Edwin de Kock, Sook Young Kim, Jung Haeng Kwon, Myun Ju Lee, Nicolas Miller, Dae Geuk Nam, Trevor O' Reggio, William H. Shea, Alberto R. Treiyer, Koot van Wyk, "538 A.D. and the Transition from Pagan Roman Empire to Holy Roman Empire: Justinian's Metamorphosis from Chief of Staffs to Theologian," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 7, no. 1 (2017): 57, 64-65. Cited 2 November 2021. Online: http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_7_No_1_January_2017/7.pdf; Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 73-76.

³⁵ Maxwell, "Mark of the Beast," 126-28.

³⁶ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Donation of Constantine," says that it was "without doubt a forgery, fabricated somewhere between the years 750 and 850." The document was accepted as authentic until the fifteenth century, when it was finally proved to be a forgery. Its contents included that "the emperor makes a present to the pope and his successors of the Lateran palace, of Rome and the provinces, districts, and towns of Italy and all the Western regions The document goes on to say that for himself the emperor has established in the East a new capital which bears his name, and thither he removes his government, since it is inconvenient that a secular emperor have power where God has established the residence of the head of the Christian religion."

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over kings and emperors, with authority to crown them or to depose them or place their nation under interdict in order to put public pressure on them to yield to papal authority. The papal plan was to rule the world.³⁷

What, then, of the seventh head of the Dragon? According to Rev 13:12, 14, the Beast from the Sea continues its power after the healing of its deadly wound, supported by the Beast from the Earth, who “exercises all the power of the first beast on its behalf and compels the earth and those who live in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed” (v. 12). This indicates another last-day power that arises after the healing of the deadly wound and is a superpower like that of the Beast from the Sea and shares the coercive nature of the first Beast to force people to worship the first Beast. This is the only power in Revelation that could be rightly represented by the seventh Head on the Dragon—and it has no equivalent in Daniel, which ends with the feet and toes of the image in Dan 2 and with the Ten Horns and Little Horn in Dan 7, which are old-world powers. The Beast from the Earth seems to be a new-world power, as suggested by the scenario in Rev 12:14-16, which points to the earth opening its mouth to swallow up the flood of people that the Dragon/Serpent spewed out of its mouth in order to sweep the Woman away with the flood. The portrayal of the Woman fleeing into the wilderness, a desolate place largely devoid of population and poorly suited for life, is an apt portrayal of the opening up of the new world as a place for the faithful people of God to flee to for refuge from persecution by the Holy Roman Empire under the direction of the papal Inquisition. The timing was right: within the 1260 years (12:6,14; cf. 13:5) of papal domination beginning in 538 and ending in 1798. The seventh Head was in the distant future for John but would rule for a relatively short period before the end of history (17:10). The sixth (Roman) Head had already ruled for nearly two thousand years when the seventh Head began to rule, and the seventh Head may well rule less than three hundred years before the end of history takes effect, which is a relatively brief time.

It is impossible for the papacy to be considered to be the seventh head, since not only was it a continuation of the Roman empire with its seat in Rome (cf. Rev 13:2) but it rules from 538 A.D. until the end of human history except for a brief hiatus after receiving its deadly wound in 1798. Its seat in Rome was officially restored by Mussolini in 1929 in

³⁷ Pope Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* (Encyclical *On the Peace of Christ in His Kingdom*), December 23, 1922 (www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pil1ua.htm, accessed December 21, 2017), section 67.

the Lateran Treaty, and its power has grown until today.³⁸ It is now once again one of the most powerful forces on earth, not only in the Christian world but also in the non-Christian world.

Is Babylon the Papacy?

The papacy has been shown to be best represented by the Beast from the Sea in Rev 13, which is equivalent to the Little Horn power of Dan 7 and 8, and as the sixth head on the Dragon/ Scarlet Beast. In other words, the papacy is represented by one of the seven Heads or Mountains (kingdoms) in Rev 17, on which the Harlot Babylon sits. Babylon, however, has been shown to be “the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth” (17:18). She has also been shown to be responsible for “the blood of prophets and saints and of all those slaughtered on the earth” (18:24). Therefore, Babylon cannot be the papacy, and the papacy cannot be Babylon. Babylon is a dominant spirit that has been around since Cain slew his brother Abel, “because he [Abel] was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts” (Heb 11:4), while God did not approve of Cain’s gifts (Gen 4:5). She rules over the nations of the earth, causing them to hate the righteous, like Cain hated Abel, and to rebel against God and His decrees, like Cain did. This lawless and rebellious spirit has ruled every one of the major nations of earth that has come into contact with God’s people and thus with God.

What Is Babylon?

Babylon originally derives its symbolic characteristics from the city and tower of Babel (or Babylon) as recorded in Gen 11:1-9.³⁹ Built by Nimrod, “the first powerful man on earth” (10:8) and “a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD” (10:9),⁴⁰ Babylon very early in biblical history

³⁸ Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2:346.

³⁹ For an extensive overview of the Babylon motif in Scripture, see Edwin E. Reynolds, “The Sodom/Egypt/Babylon Motif in the Book of Revelation,” Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1994), 140-174.

⁴⁰ It is also possible to read, “a mighty hunter against the LORD,” taking the preposition \bar{y} in the negative sense of action “over against” (see William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971], s.v. \bar{y}). The Jerusalem Targum English (JTE) version reads, “He was mighty in hunting and in sin before the Lord; for he was a hunter of the sons of men in their languages” (BibleWorks [1992-2015]). According to Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-day Adventist International Biblical Commentary ([Boise, ID]: Pacific Press,

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became a type for the spirit of rebellion against God. Nimrod and his colleagues built the city and the tower as a way of defying God's command to spread out and fill the earth (9:7; 11:4) and His promise not to destroy the earth again with a flood of water (9:11,15; 11:4). They also determined to make a name for themselves (11:4), much like later empires would attempt to do.⁴¹ But God dispersed them against their will and confused their languages (11:5-9), so that the city was called Babylon (lb,B', *bābel*)⁴² because there the LORD confused (ll;B' [Gen. 11:9], *bālal*) their languages. It became a type of what would take place later at different periods of history.

The spirit of spiritual Babylon is present in all of the seven Heads on the Dragon, and that spirit is really the spirit of the Dragon manifest on earth as ruling over the Heads (and the Horns on the sixth Head) of the Scarlet Beast, which as an eighth king rules in the eschatological period after the line of the historical seven kingdoms (Rev 17:11). The papacy was one of those Heads, or kingdoms, as shown above. It was ruled by the spirit of Babylon and could be thus considered a representative of Babylon in its historical period. Babylon is much greater than the papacy and far more extensive in history. The papacy did not arise as a world power until 538 A.D., and although it has ruled longer than any other power, it is not co-extensive with Babylon. There was no papacy in the Old Testament period, but spiritual Babylon was already there. As we have seen, it was early on exemplified by the spirit of the Babel/Babylon builders, but it has been far more destructive through history than the builders of the original city and its tower, and God promises to judge it accordingly.

Summary

The biblical evidence very strongly indicates that spiritual Babylon is much larger and more extensive historically than the papacy, going at least as far back as the tower of Babel and the city of ancient Babylon,

and [Silver Spring, MD]: Review and Herald, 2016), 185, Nimrod's name means "we shall rebel," furthering the typology of Babylon in the name of its creator.

⁴¹ Doukhan, *Genesis*, 186, states, "The theme of Babel will appear across the Scriptures as a warning against any human attempt to embark on the same path that seeks to replace God."

⁴² The LXX reads Σύγχυσις ("confusion") here, rather than Βαβυλῶν, suggesting perhaps that the translators either saw *balal* in the Hebrew text they had before them, or they concluded that the text should read *balal* instead of *babel*. Alternatively, they utilized the play on words between *babel* and *balal* to make a clearer point when translating the Hebrew into Greek.

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established by Nimrod (Gen 10:6-10), and probably all the way back to Cain and Abel (Rev 18:24). Papal Rome claims to trace its roots back as far as Peter, the first bishop of Rome, in a line of continuous apostolic succession.⁴³ However, it was difficult to substantiate its function as one of the seven Heads until the Roman emperor Justinian I left the civil power in Western Rome to be controlled by the bishop of Rome. From that point onward, the papacy increasingly controlled the civil powers in the West, leading to the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire, a union of church and state that became increasingly despotic until the time of the Protestant Reformation. The power of the Roman Church was temporarily suspended in 1798 by the arrest and imprisonment of Pope Pius VI and the confiscation of the lands and monies of the Church by the army of Napoleon.⁴⁴ Although all of this was returned to the Church by Mussolini in the Lateran Treaty of 1929, and the papacy has returned to power once again (cf. Rev 13:3) as a city-state—Vatican City⁴⁵—with its own flag, money, civil authorities, ambassadors, and so forth, it is still under the domination of spiritual Babylon, according to Rev 17:18. It may behave like Babylon and bear the characteristics of Babylon, but it is not spiritual Babylon any more than any of the other six Heads are Babylon. Each did the work of Babylon, because Babylon was the controlling influence over it. But it is important biblically to draw a distinction between the seven Heads and Ten Horns and the Harlot which is depicted as sitting on them and ruling over them. We may refer to the papacy as a historical representative of spiritual Babylon that has dominated the world for much of the Christian era and will play an important role in end-time events (Rev 13:12, 14-15), but we should not conclude that the papacy is actually Babylon itself. The two are separate and distinct entities in the book of Revelation, not to be confused with each other.

Conclusion

Evidence has been presented showing that the Roman papacy is one of the seven heads on the Dragon in Rev 12 and the Scarlet Beast in Rev 17, as well as the Beast from the Sea in Rev 13 and the Little Horn of Dan 7-8. It is a very significant civil and religious power on earth, ruling

⁴³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “The Pope.”

⁴⁴ Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2:328-29.

⁴⁵ An earlier attempt by the Italian parliament in 1871 to restore the prerogatives of the Holy See and the relations between state and church in the kingdom of Italy had been rejected by Pope Pius IX. *Ibid.*, 2:346; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Law of Guarantees.”

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longer than any other power in history. Yet it has a limited history, confined to the Christian era, with no presence in Old Testament history.

Babylon, on the other hand, is shown in Rev 17:18 to reign over all of the Heads of the Scarlet Beast, which are the major kingdoms depicted as Mountains in 17:9, on which she sits, five of which are already “fallen” in John’s day, one “is,” and the other still lies in the distant future for John (v. 10). Babylon, then, dominates all of these kingdoms with her corrupting influence, beginning with ancient Egypt, followed by Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Grecia, Rome (both pagan and papal phases), and the new-world superpower of the United States (as depicted in 13:11-17). Furthermore, Babylon is held responsible for the blood of all who have been slain on the earth (18:24), extending the spirit of Babylon all the way back to the death of Abel in Gen 4. With this extensive history for Babylon, which is essentially coextensive with the earthly dominance of the Dragon, Satan himself, there is no way that the papacy can be said to be equivalent to spiritual Babylon.

This does not suggest that the papacy does not have the spirit of Babylon, as did all of the earthly powers that are under its dominant influences, but it cannot be coextensive with Babylon or be understood to be identical with Babylon. The two are not interchangeable entities.

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