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7 But the angel said unto me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

10 “There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

11 “And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”

Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery... (17:7)

As the passage continues in Revelation 17, John’s guiding angel takes over. To the angel there was no mystery about this awesome sight of

Harlot and Beast. But the angel knew that the apostle, somewhat overawed by the spectacle, needed some explanation.

And probably the angel was thinking also that the future generation in whose time these events were going to take place would need some explanation. So he goes on to recount the momentous struggle between the *Harlot* and the *Beast* empires (covered in the next Post).

In John the apostle's day, riddle-telling was a favorite pastime, and indeed, the angels' explanation of the "mystery" sounds as if he's telling a riddle, not being too explicit, yet at the same time throwing out a few hints that would enable us, centuries later, to decipher the meaning of the "mystery" (*"of the woman, and of the beast that carries her"*).

Sometimes God likes to tease our minds a bit and let us guess and try to figure out the meaning of His "mysteries". And that causes us to seek Him more than if He made it too easy by telling us the exact names of nations or historical dates.

Which has the seven heads and the ten horns (17:7)

The Seven Heads were explained in Post 3, and it may help to look again at the illustration to recall what the Heads represent.



Illustration from publication of [The Family International](#)

The *Ten Horns* and their activities, as we shall learn further ahead, are a particular feature of the Beast that manifests in the End of the Age, along with the simultaneous existence of an *8th Beast* (mentioned in 17:11).

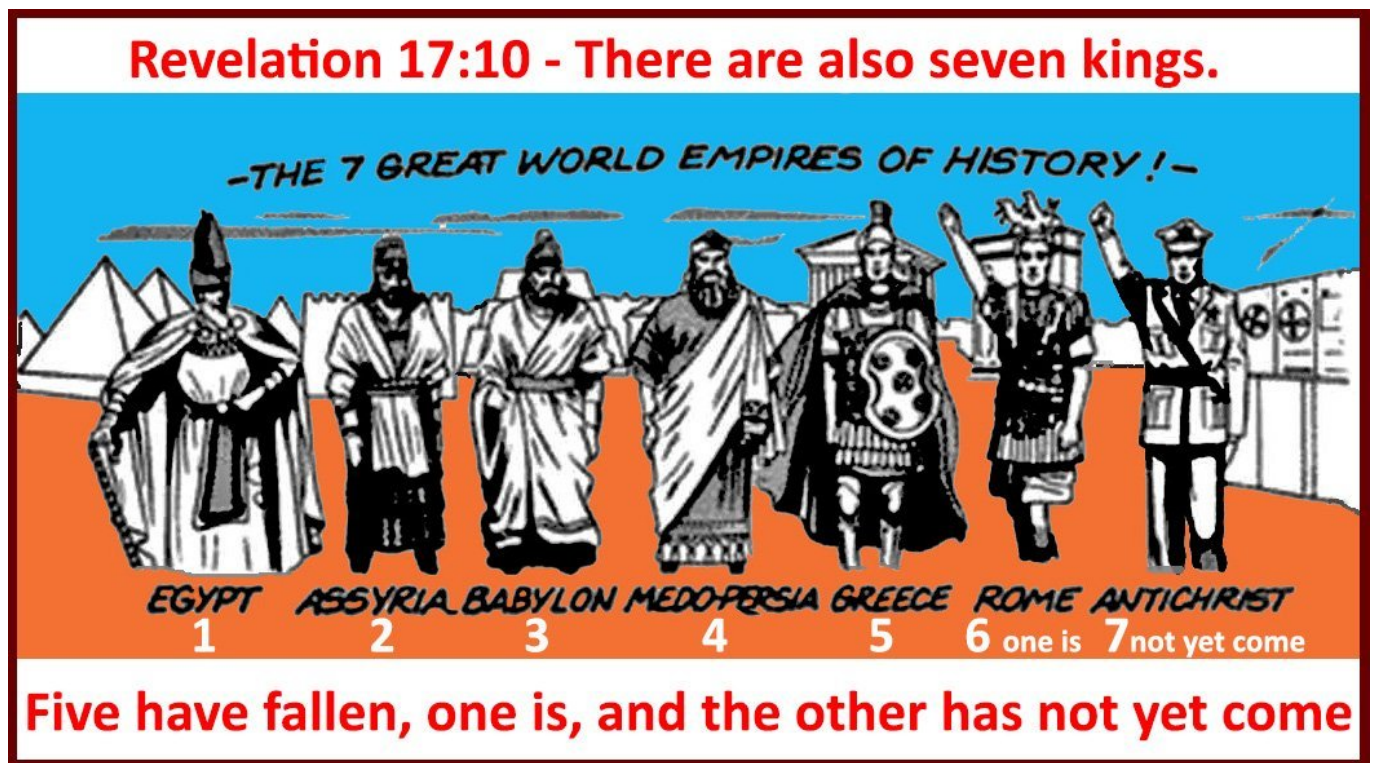
The angel had said he would tell John about “*the mystery of the*

woman, and of the beast". But how to apply it to historical reality was not something that could be understood in times past. Not until modern times has this mystery begun to reveal itself - before our very eyes.

The beast that was, and is not, and yet is (17:8)

Up to this point the revelation has had a more general application to all the regimes of history; it hasn't pointed too directly to any specific historical era or nation. But now, the angel is starting to divulge details that do pinpoint precisely where and how the revelation will be fulfilled. Like a series of signposts, this and following verses change the direction of the angel's message as he begins to zero in on one particular manifestation of the *Harlot* and the *Beast* - their appearance at the End of the Age.

The angel says the *Beast* "*was... and yet is*". These features of the *Beast* represent its past manifestations in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, and its present (in John's day) manifestation as the Roman empire. These empires had followed one after another and had ruled or were ruling over the land of Israel. But after Rome there was no Israel, so the last 2,000 years has seen this peculiar "*is not*" feature of the *Beast* who has had to retreat into "*the bottomless pit*".



Different versions of this phrase - "*the beast that was, and is not, and yet is*" - are referred to in verses 8-11, with a clear explanation given in verse 10. Presumably, the intent was to make it known that this catastrophic overthrow of the *Harlot* by the *Beast* would not happen in the days of the Roman empire; it is meant for a future age.

And will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition (17:8)

But now that Israel is back in existence, the *Beast* will soon re-appear on the world stage. There have, of course, been many *Beasts* throughout history, many empires that have controlled large portions of the world. But what is being referred to here is that particular *Beast* who is to rule over the Jewish people after their re-appearance as a nation in the land of Israel.

And like so many empires that have come and gone, the *Beast* originates from the "*bottomless pit*". That is to say, the forces of Darkness have concocted this final regime with the aim of setting up an empire and leader capable of drawing the world's citizens away from God and into worship of a demagogue and/or into service to his utopian

dreamland. This is a pattern that started long ago in the city of Babel where its dwellers said they wanted to *“build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad.”* (Genesis 11:4)



Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts

Eventually, the rule of this final Beast comes to its inglorious end as it goes *“into perdition”*. And he takes along with him the other *Beasts* (represented by the other six *Heads*) who have already come and gone. In

Daniel 7 it was said of some of these *Beasts* of the past that *“their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”* (7:12) And the reason for that, it seems, is so they could re-appear with the final *Beast* at the End of the Age.

Indeed, Revelation 13 describes the final Beast as *“like a leopard, his feet... like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.”* (13:2) In other words, it has characteristics borrowed from the Greek, Medo-Persian, and Babylonian empires (according to how they were portrayed in Daniel 7:3-6).

Here is a brief, and by no means complete, summary of features borrowed from previous empires that will empower the final empire to rule the world of the near-future:

- **Egypt:** deep spiritual links to the realm of Darkness; slave labour organization
- **Assyria:** ruthlessness
- **Babylon:** wisdom
- **Medo-Persia:** administration; practical genius
- **Greece:** charismatic ruler; speedy conquest of territory
- **Rome:** military-political administration
- **Final empire:** modern technology

With the combined wisdom and might of these former empires, Earth's final empire will easily become the most powerful of all empires - in that final era when, according to Christ, *“there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* (Matthew 24:21; also Daniel 12:1, Mark 13:19)

And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (17:8)

Earlier, the apostle had *“marveled with great amazement”* at the sight of the *Great Harlot*, to which the angel reproved him, saying, *“Why did you marvel?”* (17:6-7) If it was easy for the apostle to *“marvel”*, how much more the people of the world who are separated from the knowledge of God and *“whose names are not written in the Book of Life”*. (For more information about the *Book of Life*, see this [Post](#).)

As they behold the collapse of America and the re-structuring of the world system under new and dynamic leadership, they will fall easily into the Antichrist and False Prophet's new religious system based on worship of the Antichrist and receiving the *"mark of the beast"*.

The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits (17:9)

As explained in [Appendix 2](#), the *Woman*, the *Harlot*, has been around all through history, since she is viewed here as sitting on (stifling) the different empires that have ruled over Israel.

So far in his explanation of the riddle/mystery, the angel has focused on describing the *Harlot* but has not said much about the *Beast* or its *Heads*. Now he explains that the *"seven heads"* are *"seven mountains"*.

When used like this in Scripture, *"mountains"* symbolizes governments or great empires or powers. *"The mountain of the Lord's House"*, for example, refers to the Kingdom of God. (Isaiah 2:2-3, Micah 4:1-3) In this case, the *"mountains"* symbolism is equivalent to the *"beasts"* symbolism. A *Head* then is the same as an empire. Yet it is also a person, a king, for as the next verse states,

There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come (17:10)

The explanation for the *Seven Heads* continues. And we find out that, not only are they *"mountains"* but *"kings"*. By this we understand that there is a certain amount of interchangeability in the terms *"head"* and *"beast"*. One cannot claim to be a *"head"* without having an empire, neither is an empire very strong without a dynamic ruler at the head of it. (See discussion on this in ["Head = Beast? King = Kingdom?"](#))

In addition, the angel explains here what he meant by his earlier cryptic phrase, *"the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."* If it was a little vague before, now it is clear - *"five have fallen"* (the five who ruled over Israel in the past); *"one is"* (Rome, the ruler in John's day); *"the other has not yet come"* (the final empire to conquer Israel which, according to [Ezekiel 38-39](#), will be the Russian Federation).

And when he comes, he must continue a short time (17:10)

Thankfully, this most powerful and tyrannical of all empires will last only “a short time” - a point that is mentioned elsewhere in the *Revelation Book* (12:12, 13:5).

And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth (17:11)

If the angel sounded a bit mysterious before, now he really sounds mysterious; the *Beast* is also the *Eighth*? What on earth is he talking about? The answers to most riddles - after we figure them out - seem awfully simple. And we often say, “Of course, how could I not have seen it?” Yet, to solve the riddle, is difficult, because it usually means seeing things from a perspective different from the one to which we are accustomed.

The following may not be the only explanation, or the entire explanation, but should offer a reasonable starting point to solving the mystery of the *8th Beast*. (Incidentally, another post [“Appendix: the Eighth Head”](#) also expounds on this subject.)

From what we’ve learned so far, this peculiar phrase about “*the beast that was, and is not*” is referring to the seven-headed, ten-horned *Beast* that had astonished John earlier (in Revelation 13:1-10) and is mentioned again here in chapter 17; but more specifically, the angel is drawing attention to the final “*is-not*” *Head* of that *Beast* which had not arrived on the world scene in John’s day when these Revelation chapters were written. And he adds a bit more information too, that this *Beast* will “*go to perdition*”.

Back in Revelation 13, the apostle had his vision of two *Beasts* headed by two powerful persons - known later as the *Antichrist* and *False Prophet*. These two *Beasts* did not represent consecutive empires but were to rule simultaneously - a powerful combination that will dominate the Earth shortly before the Second Coming.

The *Antichrist* and his empire are called the “*beast rising up out of the sea*”. (13:1) Further ahead, a key detail is mentioned; this *Beast* is designated as the “*first beast (or first Head, same thing)*”. (twice in

13:12) Why? To save confusion - because the Antichrist is not the only *Beast* to appear in the End of the Age. For, lo and behold, in verse 11 “another beast” has popped up - “out of the earth” this time, not the “sea”. And so, the two *Beasts* are differentiated from one another.

Well, here it is. Here is the key to unlock the mystery. If the final *Beast* possesses “seven heads” (representing 7 *Beasts*), and if the *Antichrist* is the 7th *Head/Beast*, then logically, this next *Beast* must be the 8th. The second *Beast* in this chapter 13 about modern times is actually the 8th *Beast*, or 8th *Head*, the 8th superpower, who works simultaneously and in conjunction with the “first beast”.

The “seven heads” belong in the category of *Beasts* “coming up out of the sea”; whereas the eighth one comes “up out of the earth”. (13:1,11) The military-political kingdoms with a powerful ruler at the helm have always been around, these 7 *Heads*; and the phrase “of the seven” merely clarifies that this 8th *Head/Beast*, even though it is different in nature, is still to be counted amongst them, or at least with the seventh *Head*.

Since the *Sea* and *Earth-Beasts* are a team, the “first beast” from the sea is found on closer inspection to possess another mysterious eighth “head” (the second *Beast* of Revelation 13). And both of them will suffer the same fate of “going to perdition” - along with all the other *Heads/Beasts*.

In a sense the *Earth-Beast* - like the *Beasts* from the sea - has been around all through history. At least his religion of Materialism has been around; but not until modern times have the merchants of Materialism gained a large measure of dominance over the affairs of humankind.

There were mini-versions in the past. For example, the *East India Trading Company* ruled India for about 100 years, during which time, besides exploiting India’s natural resources, the company also refused entry to those dedicated men and women who wanted to bring the Good News to that land - for fear the people might become empowered to rule themselves.

Nowadays, there exists a huge nation - China, another vast “trading company” - that is officially atheist, engaged in suppressing all forms of

religious activity. And Europe, in a more subtle fashion, looks to be heading in the same direction.

The 7 + 1 "heads" of the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17		
<u>From the "sea"</u>		<u>From the "earth"</u>
1) Egypt		--
2) Assyria		--
3) Babylon		--
4) Medo-Persia		--
5) Greece		--
6) Rome		--
7) Russia?	+	8) China? European Union?
- Antichrist		- False Prophet

Related to the question of how can the seventh also be the eighth, we could ask a similar question about the "feet" in the Daniel 2 "image": why do the iron and clay materials in the feet "mix"? Well, it must have something to do with a combining of the two separate empires' resources or rule, or something of that nature.

So the final End of the Age empire is actually made up of two parallel empires. They do more than co-exist; they cooperate and unite their combined resources, so that they can overthrow the *Great Harlot* and bear rule over much of the world.

Translated into historical reality, what this means is that God is allowing these empires to rise up. And why? He will not continue to tolerate America's sins of selfish greed and violence against the rest of the world - crimes she is committing in spite of being regarded by the world as the stronghold of Christianity. So God is allowing her enemies to rise up and cause her catastrophic collapse.

Regarding the concept of parallel empires, here is an illustration on a

smaller scale. Consider the influence of a nation's capital city: even though it is located in one particular spot, the influence of the government is not limited to that city or state, but extends throughout the entire country. And in many nations, there exist two centers of power; one city is the political capital, while another city has become the unofficial economic capital, whose influence also spreads throughout the nation. But even though there may be two centers of power, they're still part of the same nation.

Likewise, the *Antichrist* and *False Prophet* will each have their respective spheres of influence, which will not be confined to their borders, but will spread into each other's empires and throughout much of the earth. And they will join forces, working together as one empire.

The *Antichrist* is the warlike "*beast from the sea*" who does the hard work of conquering Israel and the Mideast and overthrowing the *American Harlot* - with plenty of help from the *False Prophet Beast*, of course. And because they are co-rulers, then that *8th Beast* also gets to rule over the same area.

The 7th and 8th *Beasts* would have started off as independent kingdoms, of course. Then perhaps what will transpire, as the alliance between them grows, they will essentially become one empire. We are even now seeing the early manifestations of this in the growing cooperation between the Russian and Chinese superpowers. (See [Footnote quote](#) to get an idea how this is starting to happen even now.)

It appears that the *Antichrist* will be recognized as the overall ruler. That could be why verse 11 states, "*The beast that was, and is not [the Antichrist], is himself also the eighth*". The wording suggests that the *Antichrist's* kingdom comes to include or absorb the "*eighth*" *Beast*, and not vice-versa. Something similar happened in former times. The Persian nation had joined forces with the Medes to create the dual empire of the Medes and Persians, but after awhile the Persians emerged as the dominant ruler in that ancient empire.

This background role of the *8th Beast's* empire in relation to the *Antichrist's* empire is not too surprising when we consider that he was also named the *False Prophet* in the *Revelation Book*. Historically,

prophets never had kingdoms of their own since they were always the kingmakers, not the kings themselves.

So it seems that once this final *False Prophet* has “made” the Antichrist, then he has played his part and steps somewhat into the background afterwards. That seems to be the picture anyway that Revelation 13 gives about this *8th Head/Beast* (the 2nd in that chapter) and his activities and role in the empire of the near future. He is a kingmaker whose role is to put the *Antichrist* into power.

However, to be a kingmaker in our huge-sized modern world requires having available the back-up of a massive infrastructure - a whole empire in other words (indicated by its symbolism as a *Beast*) - to provide the administration, resources, manpower, technology, and industry that will be needed to manage the world. It takes more than just the military might and political leadership of the *Antichrist* and his host country, Russia.

There is also the economic and religious side (religion of no-religion). China’s (and perhaps the EU’s) participation and cooperation will be essential in the Devil’s plan to establish in the world a new economic and political order, with its new secular religion - a mix of Demagoguery and Materialism. (In ancient times this might have been called emperor-worship and Mammon-worship).

In Daniel 7 we learn about the final *Beast* that it “*shall devour the whole earth.*” (7:23) Now here in Revelation 17 we get a more complete understanding of how this final *Beast* will manage to carry out such a colossal undertaking; this “*eighth*” *Beast* (from the *Earth*) joins with the “*first beast*” to contribute the resources that are needed to manage this complete conquest of the world.

Is of the seven (17:11)

The next phrase “*of the seven*” is just a way of saying there are two types of *Beasts* or empires: firstly, the seven *Sea-Beasts*, to whom belongs the final “*is-not*” *Head/Beast*; and then there is this peculiar *Eighth Head/Beast* “*coming up out of the earth*”. And because that means the final *Sea-Beast* is actually a two-headed *Beast*, then that *Eighth Head/Beast* joins the seven and suffers their same fate of “*going to*

perdition”.

The power of this *8th Head/Beast* depends on his control over the world's wealth, through which he gains spiritual control over Earth's inhabitants; whereas the power base for the *Sea-Beasts* has always started with their military and political control over the world's people, through which they also gain spiritual control over them.

This *8th Beast*, it seems, shows up only in the End of the Age era. But in a way he too has been around since the Beginning, but never powerful enough to rule over Israel and the Middle East and still remain independent. Nevertheless, while different empires have come and gone throughout history, the religion of Materialism has always flourished and encouraged this natural attachment to the things of earth, leading to various peculiar forms of worship.

We could surmise that this “*beast from the earth*” started off with false prophets and priests of the past who would attach themselves (behind the scenes mostly) to whichever king or “*beast*” was in power at different times in history. This religion of Materialism, whatever form it took, has always mixed in with the different superpowers and turned them into harlots (as outlined in [Appendix 2](#)).

What seems different in the modern day is that the power of wealth and industry has grown to such a point that, finally, it has gained a large measure of dominance over the world. It can stand on its own as an independent, strong superpower - a *Beast* in other words.

In this vision, the *Harlot's* Materialism has sat on all the *Beasts* that have come and gone. But in the case of the 7th and 8th *Beasts*, those forces of Materialism re-invent themselves into a different sort of entity, known in the *Revelation Book* as the *Earth-Beast* (or *False Prophet*) - different in that it doesn't sit on the other *Beast* oppressing it, but his control over the other *Beast* is designed to bring about his rise to power.

The time has come finally for this *Earth-Beast*, this master of deception and false religion (Materialism, secularism, atheism) to rise up, to have its own government - an independent empire whose power base will be headquartered somewhere - very likely, China, and maybe also the

European Union. (See [Shape of the Future Post 5.](#))

Although there are some similarities - both *Harlot* and *Earth-Beast* preside over the religion of Materialism - the *False Prophet* is different from the *Harlot*; he is not scrounging off the *Beast's* empire. Instead of working to tear down the *Beast* and strip him of his wealth, as the *Harlot* has always done through history, he is trying to promote him and help him get into power.

In other words, he truly plays the role of “prophet”. Near the Time of the End, the *Harlot's* control of the *Beast* is thrown off, along with her control over the world's material resources. The reins will shift fully then into the hands of the *False Prophet* and his domain - not to control and hinder the *Beast*, but to guide and promote him into worldwide supremacy.

And is going to perdition (17:11)

Earlier, we learned that the 7-headed *Beast* would “go to perdition”. (17:8) And now here in verse 11, we learn that since the 7th is also the 8th, then the 8th goes into perdition as well. Some translations make it more explicit, that this is the fate of both *Beasts*: “the eighth king... he, too, is headed for destruction.” (NLT)

Further ahead in Revelation 19:20, we read that at the coming of Christ during the Battle of Armageddon, “The beast was captured, and with him the false prophet... These two were cast alive into the lake of fire.” This expresses from a different angle what the passages in 17:8 and 11 say about the 7th and 8th *Heads/Beasts* “going to perdition”.

By matching these two passages, we understand that the *Antichrist* and *False Prophet Beasts* who get tossed into the “lake of fire” (in 19:20 and 20:10) correspond to the 7th and 8th *Heads/Beasts* in chapter 17 who just happen to go to the same place, only it's called “going to perdition”. That correlation identifies this mysterious 8th *Head/Beast* as none other than the *False Prophet Beast* “coming up out of the earth”, the second *Beast* mentioned in Revelation 13. (13:11)

And if there is any doubt as to whether or not this *False Prophet* is the

same *Earth-Beast* of Revelation 13, the passage in 19:20 goes on to say that he “*worked signs in his [the first Beast’s] presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.*” This echoes what was written in chapter 13 about the *Earth-Beast* who “*causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast*” and “*deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast*” and “*causes all... to receive a mark.*” (13:12,14,16)

Could this then be the answer to the riddle of Revelation 17:11 of how on earth does the seventh *Head* manage also to be the *Eighth*? The cryptic phrasing here was nothing more than an abbreviated way of referring to what the apostle had already been shown (in Revelation 13): two empires working closely together to rule the world in the End of the Age era.

Footnote: How one journalist views the Russia-China partnership

The fate of the world is now in the hands of Putin and Xi Jinping. It is astonishing that China is subjecting itself to *The Consensus of the Two Leaders* and shows without a shadow of a doubt that they are acting in full concert, strategically, politically, economically coordinated, and we know militarily as well, we just don’t know to what extent. [from a “[A Throne of Chinese Skulls! Oh Yeah?](#)” by Chris Faure for the *Saker Blog*, 20 December 2021]

[Caveat: The intentions of these two leaders and their empires do not sound malicious; they seem genuinely interested in bringing peace and a better world situation. The question is, how will things change in the future, especially when new leaders come to the fore, inheriting the well-built foundation established by Russia and China’s present rulers? Will they continue to build wisely, or will they turn aside into totalitarian tyranny?]

[\[RETURN\]](#)

Continue to **[4B: Angel Explains the Mystery \(17:12-18\)](#)**