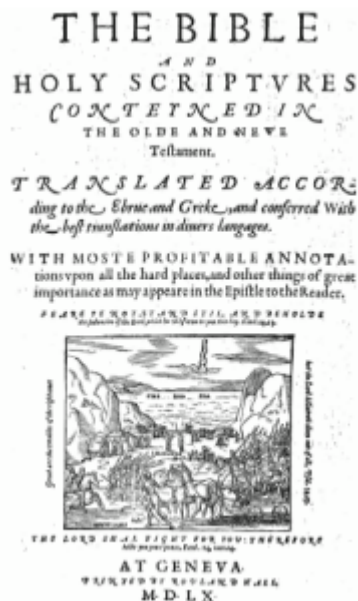


The Geneva Bible Notes Explain Revelation 17 & 18



The Geneva Bible was the English Bible of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation up till the time that the King James authorized version took its place. Some people have questioned what the motivation of King James was in authorizing a new translation. Was it because he didn't like the notes in the Geneva Bible? As you can see, the writers of the notes in the Geneva Bible clearly pointed the finger at the Roman Catholic Church for being the woman and the whore of Revelation 17 and 18. And they considered the "scarlet coloured beast" of those chapters as the governmental system of which Rome was – and still is – the head.

I believe the King James version is still the best translation of the English Bible we have today. This article is merely to show what the Protestant leaders thought of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope.

The **bold emphasis** on this page are mine.

Re 17:1

17:1 And {1} there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto {2} thee the {a} judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

(1) The state of the Church militant being declared, now follows the state of the church overcoming and getting victory, as I showed before in the beginning of the tenth chapter. This state is set forth in four chapters. As in the place before I noted, that in that history the order of time was not always exactly observed so the same is to be understood in this history, that it is distinguished according to the people of which it speaks, and that the stories of the people are observed in the time of it. For first is delivered the story of Babylon destroyed in this and the next chapter (for this Babylon

out of all doubt, shall perish before the two beasts and the dragon). Secondly, is delivered the destruction of both the two beasts, chapter nineteen and lastly of the dragon, chapter eighteen. In the story of the spiritual Babylon, are distinctly set forth the state of it in this chapter, and the overthrow done from the first argument, consisting of the particular calling of the prophet (as often before) and a general proposition.

(2) That is, that damnable harlot, by a figure of speech called "hyppalage". For John as yet had not seen her. Although another interpretation may be thought of, yet I like this better.

(a) The sentence that is pronounced against this harlot.

Re 17:3

17:3 {3} So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a {b} scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

(3) Henceforth is propounded the type of Babylon, and the state of it, in four verses. After, a declaration of the type, in the rest of this chapter. In the type are described two things, the beast (of whom chapter thirteen speaks), in this verse and the woman that sits on the beast in Re 17:4-6 . The beast in process of time has gotten somewhat more than was expressed in the former vision. First in that it is not read before that he was apparelled in scarlet, a robe imperial and of triumph. Secondly, in that this is full of names of blasphemy: the other carried the name of blasphemy only in his heads. So God teaches that this beast is much increased in impiety and injustice and does in this last age, triumph in both these more insolently and proudly then ever before.

(b) A scarlet colour, that is, with a red and purple garment: and surely it was not without cause **the romish clergy were so much delighted with this colour.**

Re 17:4

17:4 And {4} the woman was arrayed {5} in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having {6} a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

(4) That harlot, the spiritual Babylon, **which is Rome.** She is described by her attire, profession, and deeds.

(5) In attire most glorious, triumphant, most rich, and most gorgeous.

(6) In profession the nourisher of all, in this verse and teaching her mysteries to all, Re 17:5 setting forth all things most magnificently: but indeed fatally besetting miserable men with her cup, and brings upon them a deadly giddiness.

Re 17:5

17:5 {7} And upon her forehead [was] a name written, MYSTERY, {8} BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

(7) **Deceiving with the title of religion,** and public inscription of mystery:

which the beast in times past did not bear.

(8) An exposition: in which John declares what manner of woman this is.

Re 17:6

17:6 {9} And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: {10} and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

(9) In manner of deeds: She is red with blood, and sheds it most licentiously, and therefore is coloured with the blood of the saints, as on the contrary part, Christ is set forth imbued with the blood of her enemies; Isa 63:1 .

(10) A passage to the second part of this chapter, by occasion given of John, as the words of the angel do show in the next verse.

Re 17:7

17:7 {11} And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

(11) The second part or place as I said in See Geneva "Re 17:1". The narration of the vision promised in the verse following. Now there is delivered first a narration of the beast and his story, to verse fourteen. After, of the harlot, to the end of the chapter.

Re 17:8

17:8 {12} The beast that thou sawest {13} was, and is not; and {14} shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, {15} when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

(12) The story of the beast has a triple description of him. The first is a distinction of this beast from all that ever have been at any time: which distinction is contained in this verse: The second is a delineation or painting out of the beast by things present, by which he might even at that time be known by the godly: and this delineation is according to his heads in Re 17:12-14 . **This beast is that empire of Rome**, of which I spoke in see Geneva (15) "Re 13:11" according to the mutations and changes of which then had already happened, the Holy Spirit has distinguished and set out the same. The apostle distinguishes this beast from all others in these words "the beast which thou saw, was and is not." For so I expound the words of the apostle for the evidence's sake, as I will further declare in the notes following.

(13) The meaning is, that beast which you saw before in Re 13:1 and which you have now seen, was (was I say) from Julius Caesar in respect to beginning, rising up, station, glory, dominion, manner and family, from the house of Julius: and yet is not now the same, if you look to the house and family: for the dominion of this family was translated to another, after the death of

Nero from that other to a third, from a third to a fourth, and so on, was varied and altered by innumerable changes. Finally, the Empire is one, as it were one beast: but exceedingly varied by kindreds, families, and persons. It was therefore (says John) in the kindred or house of Julius: and now it is not in that kindred, but translated to another.

(14) As if he should say, "Also this same that is, shall shortly not be: but shall ascend out of the depth, or out of the sea" (as was said) in Re 13:1 that is, shall be a new stock from among the nations without difference and shall in the same state go to into destruction, or run and perish: and so shall successively new princes or emperors come and go, arise and fall, the body of the beast remaining still, but tossed with many frequent alterations, as no man can but marvel that this beast was able to stand and hold out, in so many mutations, verily no empire that ever was tossed with so many changes, and as it were with so many tempests of the sea, ever continued so long.

Re 17:9

17:9 {16} And here [is] the mind which hath wisdom. The {c} seven heads {17} are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

(16) An exhortation preparing for the readers in the same argument, as that of Christ "He that hath ears to hear let him hear". I would rather read in this passage "Let there be here a mind, etc". So the angel passes to the second place of this description.

(c) **Children know what the seven hilled city is**, which is so much spoken of, and where of Virgil thus reports, "And compasses seven towers in one wall", that city it is, which when John wrote these things, had rule over the kings of the earth. It was and is not, and yet it remains to this day, but it is declining to destruction.

(17) This is the description of the beast by things present (as I said before) by which John endeavoured to describe the same, that he might be both known of the godly in that age, and be further observed and marked of posterity afterwards. This delineation has one tip, that is, his heads, but a double description or application of the type: one permanent, from the nature itself, the other changeable, by the working of men. The description permanent, is by the seven hills, in this verse, the other that flees, is from the seven kings, Re 17:10,11 . Here it is worthy to be observed, that one type has sometime two or more applications, as seems good to the Holy Spirit to express, either one thing by various types, or various things by one type. So I noted before of the seven spirits in see Geneva "Re 1:4". Now **this woman that sits on seven hills, is the city of Rome**, called in times past by the Greeks, "upon a hill" i. of seven tops or crests and by Varro, "septiceps" i. of her seven heads (as here) of seven heads, and by others, "septem collis" i. standing upon seven hills.

Re 17:10

17:10 {18} And there are seven kings: {19} five are fallen, {20} and one is, {21} [and] the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

(18) The beginning of these kings or emperors is almost the same as the beginning of the Church of Christ, which I showed before in see Geneva (2) "Re 11:1". Namely from the 25th year after the passion of Christ, at which time the temple and church of the Jews was overthrown. In this year it came to pass by the providence of God, that that saying "The beast was, and is not" was fulfilled before the destruction of the Jews immediately following, came to pass. That was 809 years from the building of the city of Rome at which time John counted the emperors who had been, when he wrote these things, and foretells two others next to come: and with this purpose, that when this particular prediction of things to come should take effect, the truth of all other predictions in the Church, might be the more confirmed. God in ancient times mentioned this sign in the Law and Jeremiah confirmed it in De 18:1-22, Jer 28:8 .

(19) Whose names are these: the first, Servius Sulpitius Galba, who was the seventh emperor of the people of Rome, the second Marcus Salvius Otho, the third Avlus Vitellius, the fourth, Titus Flavius Vespasianus, the fifth, Titus Vespasianus his son, of his own name.

(20) Flavius Domitian, son of the first Vespasian. For in the latter end of his days John wrote these things, as witnesses Irenaus; Lib. 5 adversus hareses.

(21) Nerua, The empire being now translated from the family of Flavius. This man reigned only one year, four months and nine days, as the history writers tell.

Re 17:11

17:11 {22} And the beast that was, and is not, even he is {23} the eighth, and is {24} of the seven, {25} and goeth into perdition.

(22) This is spoken by synecdoche, as if to say, as that head of the beast which was and is not, because it is cut off, and Nerua in so short time extinguished. How many heads there were, so many beasts there seemed to be in one. See a similar speech in Re 13:3 .

(23) Nerua Traianus, who in various respects is called here the seventh and the eighth.

(24) Though in number and order of succession he is the eighth yet he is counted with one of these heads, because Nerua and he were one head. For this man obtained authority together with Nerua and was Consul with him, when Nerua died.

(25) Namely, to persecute the Churches of Christ, as history agrees, and I have briefly noted see Geneva "Re 2:10".

Re 17:12

17:12 {26} And the ten horns which thou sawest are {27} ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings {28} one hour with the beast.

(26) The third place of this description, as I said in see Geneva "Re 17:8" is a prophetic prediction of things to come, which the beast should do, as in the words following John does not obscurely signify, saying, "which have not yet received the kingdom, etc". For there is an antithesis or opposition

between these kings, and those that went before. First the persons are described in this verse, then their deeds, in the two verses following.

(27) That is, arising with their kingdoms out of that Roman beast: at such time as that political empire began to fall by the plotting of the popes.

(28) Namely, with that second beast, whom we called before a false prophet, who ascending out of the earth, got to himself all the authority and power of the first beast, and exercised the same before his face, as was said in Re 14:11,12 . For when the political empire of the west began to bow downwards, there arose those ten kings, and the second beast took the opportunity offered to usurp for himself all the power of the former beast. These kings long ago, many have numbered and described to be ten, and a great part of the events plainly testifies the same in this our age.

Re 17:13

17:13 {29} These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

(29) That is, by consent and agreement, that they may conspire with the beast, and depend on his call. Their story is divided into three parts, counsels, acts, and events. The counsellors some of them consist in communicating of judgments and affections: and some in communicating of power, which they are said to have given to this beast, in this verse.

Re 17:14

17:14 These shall make war with the {30} Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him [are] called, and chosen, and faithful.

(30) With Christ and his Church, as the reason following declares, and here are mentioned the facts and events which followed for Christ's sake, and for the grace of God the Father towards those that are elected, called, and are his faithful ones in Christ.

Re 17:15

17:15 {31} And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, {32} are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

(31) This is the other part of the narration, as I said in see Geneva "Re 17:7" belonging to the harlot, showed in the vision, Re 17:3 . In this history of the harlot, these three things are distinctly propounded, what is her magnificence, in this verse, what is her fall, and by whom it shall happen to her, in Re 17:16,17 : and lastly, who that harlot is, in Re 17:18 . This passage which by order of nature should have been the first, is therefore made the last, because it was more fit to be joined with the next chapter.

(32) That is, as changing and variable as the waters. Upon this foundation sits this harlot as queen, a vain person, on that which is vain.

Re 17:16

17:16 And the ten {33} horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

(33) The ten kings, as Re 17:12 . The accomplishment of this fact and event is daily increased in this our age by the singular providence and most mighty government of God. Therefore the facts are propounded in this verse, and the cause of them in the verses following.

Re 17:17

17:17 {34} For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

(34) A reason rendered from the chief efficient cause, which is the providence of God, by which alone John by inversion of order affirms to have come to pass, both that the kings should execute on the harlot that which pleased God, and which he declared in the verse before: and also that by one consent and counsel, they should give their kingdom to the beast, etc. Re 17:13,14 for as these being blinded have before depended on the call of the beast that lifts up the harlot, so it is said, that afterward it shall come to pass, that they shall turn back, and shall fall away from her, when their hearts shall be turned into better state by the grace and mercy of God.

Re 17:18

17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that {35} great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

(35) That is, Rome that great city, or only city (as Justinian calls it) the king and head of which was then the emperor, but now the pope, since the condition of the beast was changed.

Re 18:1

18:1 And {1} after these things I saw another {2} angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

(1) The second passage (as I said before) see Geneva "Re 17:1" of the history of Babylon, is of the woeful fall and ruin of that whore of Babylon. This historical prediction concerning her, is threefold. The first a plain and simple foretelling of her ruin, in three verses Re 18:2,3 . The second a figurative prediction by the circumstances, from there to Re 18:4-20 . The third, a confirmation of the same by sign or wonder, to the end of the chapter Re 18:21-24 .

(2) Either Christ the eternal word of God the Father (as often elsewhere) or a created angel, and one deputed to this service, but thoroughly provided with greatness of power, and with light of glory, as the ensign of power.

Re 18:2

18:2 {3} And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great

is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

(3) The prediction of her ruin, containing both the fall of Babylon, in this verse, and the cause of it uttered by way of allegory concerning her spiritual and carnal wickedness, that is, her most great impiety and injustice, in Re 18:3 . Her fall is first declared by the angel, and then the greatness of it is shown here, by the events when he says it shall be the seat and habitation of devils, of wild beasts, and of cursed souls, as in Isa 13:21 and often elsewhere.

Re 18:4

18:4 {4} And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, {5} Come out of her, my people, that ye {6} be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

(4) The second prediction, which is of the circumstances of the ruin of Babylon: of these there are two types: one going before it, as beforehand the godly are delivered, to the ninth verse Re 18:5-9 : the other following on her ruin, namely the lamentation of the wicked, and rejoicing of the godly, to the twentieth verse Re 18:10-20 .

(5) Two circumstance going before the ruin, are commanded in this place: one is that the godly depart out of Babylon: as I mentioned in chapter twelve to have been done in time past, before the destruction of Jerusalem: this charge is given here and in the next verse. The other is, that every one of them occupy themselves in their own place, in executing the judgment of God, as it was commanded of the Levites in Ex 32:27 and that they sanctify their hands to the Lord.

(6) Of this commandment there are two causes: to avoid the contamination of sin and to shun the participation of those punishments that belong to it.

Re 18:5

18:5 For her sins have {a} reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

(a) He uses a word which signifies the following of sins one after another, and rising one of another in such sort, that they grow at length to such a heap, that they come up even to heaven.

Re 18:6

18:6 {7} Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

(7) The provocation of the godly, and the commandment of executing the judgment of God, stand on three causes which are here expressed: the unjust wickedness of the whore of Babylon, in this verse, her cursed pride opposing itself against God, which is the fountain of all evil actions, Re 18:7 and her most just damnation by the sentence of God, Re 18:8 .

Re 18:7

18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith {b} in her heart, I sit a queen, and am {c} no widow, and shall {d} see no sorrow.

(b) With herself.

(c) I am full of people and mighty.

(d) I shall taste of none.

Re 18:8

18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in {e} one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong [is] the Lord God who judgeth her.

(e) Shortly, and at one instant.

Re 18:9

18:9 And {8} the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

(8) The circumstances following the fall of Babylon, or the consequences of it (as I distinguished them in) see Geneva "Re 18:4" are two. Namely the lamentation of the wicked to Re 18:5-19 and the rejoicing of the godly in Re 18:20 . This sorrowful lamentation, according to those that lament, has three parts: the first of which is the mourning of the kings and mighty men of the earth, Re 18:9,10 : The second is, the lamentation of the merchants that trade by land, to the sixteenth verse: Re 18:11-16 . The third is, the wailing of those that trade by sea, in Re 18:16-18 . In each of those the cause and manner of their mourning is described in order, according to the condition of those that mourn, with observation of that which best agrees to them.

Re 18:11

18:11 {9} And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

(9) The lamentation of those that trade by land, as I distinguished before.

Re 18:14

18:14 {10} And the {f} fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

(10) An apostrophe, or turning of the speech by imitation, used for more vehemence, as if those merchants, as mourners, should in passionate speech speak to Babylon, though now utterly fallen and overthrown; Isa 13:9 and in many other places.

(f) By this is meant that season which is before the fall of the leaf, at which time fruit ripens, and the word signifies such fruits as are longed

for.

Re 18:17

18:17 {11} For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

(11) The manner of mourning used by them that trade by sea.

Re 18:20

18:20 Rejoice over her, {12} [thou] heaven, and [ye] holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

(12) The other consequence on the ruin of Babylon, is the exultation or rejoicing of the godly in heaven and in earth as was noted in this verse.

Re 18:21

18:21 {13} And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast [it] into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

(13) The third prediction, as I said see Geneva "Re 18:1" based on a sign, and the interpretation of it: the interpretation of it is in two sorts, first by a simple proposal of the thing itself, in this verse, and then by declaration of the events, in the verses following.

Re 18:22

18:22 {14} And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft [he be], shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

(14) The events are two, and one of them opposite to the other for amplification sake. There shall be no mirth nor joy at all in Babylon, he says in this and the next verse, Re 18:23 but heavy and lamentable things, from the bloody slaughters of the righteous and the vengeance of God coming on it for this.

Re 18:24

18:24 And in her was found the {15} blood of prophets, {16} and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

(15) That is shed by bloody massacres, and calling for vengeance.

(16) That is, proved and found out, as if God had appointed a just inquiry concerning the impiety, unnaturalness and injustice of these men.