

Question:

What is the latest explanation on Rev 17:10-13?

Answer:

I'm not sure what you mean about the "latest" explanation. What God meant by having John write this part is the same, and has always been the same. Our understanding of it may vary, depending on how close we are to the events depicted. The parts of Revelation that have been already fulfilled are quite clear, while the parts that won't be fulfilled until after the second coming bear up under many different interpretations. Let's see where these verses fall:

"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast...." (Revelation 17:9-13)

This is clearly before the second coming, and may be taking place around us. Let's first look at a traditional protestant interpretation.

Revelation 17 is a description of the great prostitute. This clearly refers to a church. The Bible is full of metaphors in which Jesus is the bridegroom and his followers are the bride and or the guests. When a man and a woman have physical relations, a child can be the result.

When the church is in proper relationship with God, the Holy Spirit is at work among that church's members, producing people with changed characters who act in righteousness, not wickedness.

When a woman has relations with a man other than her husband, the result is illegitimate children. Clearly this is not the fault of the children. But in this metaphor this is important. This woman has committed adultery with the kings of the earth. When she lost her contact with God, the Spirit no longer worked in the hearts of her members.

Indeed, the church busily rejected those whose lives WERE being changed by

the spirit, because they were evidence that her “children” by the kings of the earth were illegitimate. Without the spirit, the church had no power to improve the lives of her members. But like most humans she felt that appearance was all she needed to produce, so she linked up with the kings (nations) of earth to punish those who would violate her rules.

Now her members look righteous, but inwardly they are still the same reprobate sinners they have always been. Unless someone intervenes they will be lost. And the church protects her false children so that they won't wake up to their lost condition. Since God wants all to be saved, the church has begun to work against God.

In the earlier description she rides a chimera, a seven-headed beast. It's description is very similar to the description of the beast of Revelation 13. This one, however, is scarlet. That's the color of a Cardinal, and an important color in the ritual of the Roman Church.

The seven hills of verse nine have been linked to the seven hills of Rome. The ten horns have been assumed to represent the ten kingdoms of Europe as seen in Daniel's visions. And the seven heads have been seen as the seven great empires of earth. In that sequence are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Papal Rome.

In John's day the first five had fallen, replaced by their respective successors. So the sixth, pagan Rome, was currently in power and the last, Papal Rome had not yet arisen. The bit in verse eight about having once been, not being now, but coming up out of the Abyss may have at one time been linked to the deadly wound of one head of the beast of Revelation 13. The ten kings are a little easier because they had not, in John's day, appeared yet.

A recent, popular interpretation of the seven kings looked at the succession of popes since 1844. Pope John Paul II was the sixth, and when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was crowned pope, this interpretation held that the end of the world would take place under his watch. I personally have some difficulty with that because the bit about “five have fallen, one is, and one is yet to come, was only true from 1978 to 2009, the thirty some-odd years of Pope John Paul II. I see no Biblical evidence to make such a restriction on the language of verse ten.

I have an idea that the details about this beast, and all the heads, horns, and crowns, is prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled. In that case we must be very careful, because God has not given us his power to see the future. Here's what I think is certain:

The prostitute is portrayed as the mother of prostitutes. So the great prostitute is the first false church, the Roman Church. The others are those churches who branched away from her in disagreement with some of her many violations of Biblical principle, but who failed to follow on in the path of reform God had set out for them.

The beast, the heads, the horns all represent political powers. Since political power, even in the most repressive regimes, is based on the people, and because the water represented people in large groups, these all represent the willingness of people to heed the prostitute and go along with her decrees. The more people she deceives, the more power she has.

I find it fascinating that the ten kings receive power with the beast for “one hour.” Following the “day for a year” principle of prophetic interpretation, that gives us about half a month. Now some traditionalists will say, and perhaps accurately, that the day for a year principle does not apply after the end of the 2300 days.

What is important is the parts of this prophecy, and the others linked with it, that we can see being fulfilled in our day. We teach that the deadly wound, the capture of the pope in 1798, was healed in 1929. It's interesting to look at what happened to the world economy about the same time!!

What do we see happening today? Americans have forgotten what is meant by religious liberty and have taken it to mean their freedom to harass others who aren't following the “true way to salvation.” Religious liberty respects the rights of individuals to practice any religion compatible with direct social well-being, or even no religion at all.

In the United States we see most protestant churches following in the footsteps of Rome, joining her in her call to make church dogma the subject of criminal law. While I do not approve of abortion, particularly when used as a “lazy man's” contraceptive, I am concerned by the insistence of American churches that abortion be outlawed in the United States.

The idea that the United States should be “Christian” is, I believe, another means for the “harlots” of this country to do the bidding of their mother and gain for her the political power she once had and for which she so brazenly lusts. The attempts of American evangelicals to mold the world after their ideas demonstrates to me that this world is their home and they have no hope for a future so good it can only be imagined by God himself.

What I find most fascinating is the closing portion of chapter seventeen in which all those who supported the great prostitute turn on her and destroy her. I believe God will in an as yet unknown time, make it clear to everyone that religion as commonly practiced worldwide, has been a hoax all along. The "pagans" won't be celebrating, because they will know that the God they claimed did not exist, was examining and controlling events all along. But those who placed their trust in these false churches will be livid, angry that the people who claimed to offer salvation were really binding them in deception and condemnation.

I could say much more about what IS revealed in the book of Revelation. I would advise that you study these things for yourself, and then be skeptical of any interpretation that claims to have it all worked out. That's usually a sign that they haven't really gotten anything worked out correctly.

May God bless,
Elkanah