

Revelation 17:7–8

The Fall of False Religion — The Beast Revealed

THE SEVEN BOWL JUDGEMENTS

Revelation 17:7–8 (NKJV)

Revelation 17:7 | The Angel's Rebuke and Promise

“But the angel said to 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.’”

Revelation 17:8 | The Beast's Three-Tense Existence

“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 have not been 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.”

Where are we? The Angel Interprets

In **verses 1–6**, John was shown the vision.

- The harlot in all her seductive glory,
- The beast she rode,
- Her golden cup,
- Her name,
- Her drunkenness with the blood of the saints.

John marvelled with great amazement.

Now the angel stops the vision and explains it.

V 7–18 is one of the most detailed prophetic interpretations in all of Scripture. God does not merely show, but He tells.

What was symbolic becomes exposed.

V 7–8 form the hinge of the chapter.

- The rebuke of John's astonishment,
- The promise of revelation, and
- The first foundational truth about the beast.
- The beasts three-tense existence and certain destiny.

Revelation 17 Structure	Content
V 1–2	The angel's invitation. Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot.
V 3–6	The vision: The woman, the beast, her cup, her name, and her drunkenness.
V 7–8 — THIS PASSAGE	The rebuke of marvelling + the beast's three-tense identity.
V 9–14	The seven heads (seven kings) and ten horns (ten kings) explained.
V 15–18	The harlot's fate. The beast and ten kings destroy her.

Introduction — The Danger of Marvell

✦ The Nuremberg Rallies — Albert Speer, 1934

*Albert Speer, Hitler's **chief architect**, later described the experience of attending his **first Nuremberg Rally in 1934**. He arrived as a sceptic — a technically-minded professional with no particular political enthusiasm. He left transformed, not by argument, but by spectacle.*

The lighting, the choreography, the scale, the pageantry — it overwhelmed his capacity for rational evaluation.

He wrote: 'I was carried away on a wave of enthusiasm which, looking back, I cannot explain.'

The rallies were designed not to persuade but to overwhelm — to bypass the critical faculty and produce marvelling in its place.

John marvels at the harlot.

The angel rebukes him.

*The rebuke is urgent: what you see is not what it is. Stop marvelling and start understanding. This is the function of **Revelation 17:7–18**.*

God will not let His people stand open-mouthed before the system that is going to persecute and kill them. He insists on clarity.

BOWL 7 The Angel's Explanation Begins.

The seventh bowl has been poured (Revelation 16:17). 'It is done.'

Now one of the seven bowl angels, the same order that administered judgment becomes the interpreter of judgment.

What was shown in verses 1–6 is now explained.

The beast's three-tense description (was / is not / will ascend) is one of the most theologically dense phrases in all of Revelation.

It is Satanic parody of God's eternal self-description. And it ends in perdition.

Revelation 17:7 — 'Why did you marvel?'

A. The Rebuke — Do not marvel.

The Greek verb is ***Thaumazō*** to wonder, to be astonished, to marvel.

It appears three times in this chapter:

- For John's marvelling (**v.6**),
- The rebuke (**v.7**), and
- The earth-dwellers who will marvel at the beast (**v.8**).

The repetition is deliberate and sobering.

*"The angel's question implies a mild rebuke. John, the aged apostle who had seen the glorified Christ in **Revelation 1**, who had watched the seals and trumpets unfold — he of all people should not have been overcome by the harlot's appearance.*

The rebuke reminds every believer: the world system, however magnificent it appears, should produce in us analysis, not admiration; sobriety, not astonishment.

The same verb (thaumazō) describes the damned in verse 8. The elect must not share the response of the lost.”

The question is rhetorical but pointed.

Why are you marvelling?

You have seen the Lamb.

You have seen the throne.

You have seen the trumpets of God’s wrath.

What is this woman compared to any of those things?

Even the most spiritually mature believers can be momentarily captured by the world system’s display. The antidote is not willpower, but it is revelation. The angel does not rebuke John and leave him, but he explains.

B. The Promise of Explanation.

V 7, ‘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.’

The word mystery does not mean ‘something puzzling.’ In New Testament usage it means a truth previously concealed that is now being disclosed by divine revelation.

Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:3–6; Colossians 1:26–27.

Now at the end of the age, the veil is pulled back entirely.

God is the great de-mystifier. He will not allow the system to maintain its deception before the eyes of His people. The angel’s promise ‘I will tell you’ is one of the great pastoral mercies of the book of Revelation.

The same God who unleashes judgment also explains it. He does not ask His people to endure what they cannot understand.

Revelation 17:8 — The Three-Tense Beast

A. The Divine Parody — Was, Is Not, Will Ascend.

V 8, *‘The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.’*

To understand this formula, it must be set alongside the description of God Himself.

Revelation 1:4, *“Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come...”*

Revelation 4:8, *“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*

*God is: who was, who is, who is to come.
The beast is: who was, who is not, who will ascend.
The parallel is not accidental, but Satanic mockery.
God’s tenses speak of eternal continuous existence.
The beast’s tenses speak of absence, instability, and a destiny of
destruction.
The counterfeit is exposed by its own grammar.*

The triple tense of the beast is a deliberate parody of the divine self-description.

- God’s triune existence is eternal.
- The beast’s triune description is counterfeit and derivative.

The beast was (in a prior form), he is not (currently absent), he will ascend (in a future demonic manifestation).

Everything about the Antichrist is imitation without substance: a false messiah, a false resurrection, a false trinity. Satan has no original creation only dark mirror images of what God truly is.

B. 'Was' — His prior existence and rise.

The beast 'was.' Three main interpretive understandings:

- The beast 'was' as the succession of world empires. **Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome** all embodying the same satanic principle in succession.
- The beast 'was' as a specific past ruler whose spirit or type returns (the Nero familiar to John's original readers).
- The beast 'was' referred to the Antichrist's initial rise in the first half of the Tribulation, his political ascendancy before the mortal wound.

C. 'Is Not' — The Mortal Wound.

Revelation 13:3, *And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast.*

The beast 'is not' — he has apparently died.

The world believes the beast finished. What appears to be the end of the beast is actually the setup for his most dramatic hour. The 'mortal wound' of **Revelation 13** and the 'is not' of **Revelation 17** describe the same event from two angles.

D. 'Will Ascend Out of the Bottomless Pit' — The Abyss

Revelation 20:1-3, *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

Satan imprisoned for 1,000 years. A real spiritual prison beneath [hysical; creation.

Revelation Reference	Event in the Abyss
Revelation 9:1–2	Fifth trumpet: the pit opens, demonic locusts emerge to torment mankind.
Revelation 9:11	The angel of the abyss: Abaddon (Heb.) / Apollyon (Gk.) — ‘The Destroyer.’
Revelation 11:7	The beast from the abyss kills the two witnesses.
Revelation 17:8	The beast ascends from the abyss — his demonic ‘resurrection.’
Revelation 20:1–3	Satan is imprisoned in the abyss for the Millennium.

E. ‘Go to Perdition’ — His Certain Destiny.

John 17:12, *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

Used of Judas.

Used for the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:3, *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*

Not annihilation but conscious, irreversible ruin in the lake of fire.

Revelation 19:20, *Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

The beast’s end was declared before his rise began.

A. Those who Marvel — The Earth-Dwellers.

V 8, *‘Those who dwell on the earth’*

This is a technical phrase in Revelation, appearing ten times. It always refers to unregenerate humanity, those whose ultimate home and allegiance is the present world order rather than the kingdom of God.

Reference	Earth-Dwellers Described
Revelation 3:10	Those from whom God’s hour of trial is not spared.
Revelation 6:10	Those whose blood the martyrs cry out to be avenged against.
Revelation 11:10	Those who celebrate the death of the two witnesses.
Revelation 13:8	Those who worship the beast, names absent from the Book of Life.
Revelation 17:8	Those who marvel at the beast’s apparent resurrection.

B. The Book of Life — Sovereign Election and Eternal Security.

V 8, *‘Whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world.’*

This phrase accomplishes three things simultaneously:

- **It explains why the earth-dwellers marvel.** They have no names in the book of Life. Their captivation by the beast is the logical outcome of their spiritual condition.
- **It establishes the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation.** Names written ‘from the foundation of the world,’ before any human choice, merit, or response.
- **It provides assurance for the believer.** If your name is in the Book, the beast’s spectacle will not permanently capture you. God’s elects are kept by sovereign grace.

The Book of Life: Appears **6 times in Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27)**. The eternal record of all who possess life in God.

‘From the foundation of the world’ before creation, in the eternal decree of God.

Ephesians 1:4–5, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He ^[a]made us accepted in the Beloved.”

“The phrase ‘from the foundation of the world’ is the most important in this verse for the believer.

Election is not reactive — God did not look down the corridors of time, foresee who would believe, and then write their names. The names were written before the world was created, in the eternal sovereign will of God.

*This is the ultimate security for the Christian. The beast cannot deceive the elect (**Matthew 24:24** — ‘if possible’).*

*God’s purpose is not overturned by the greatest deception in human history. Your name, if it is written, was written before time began, and it will not be erased (**Revelation 3:5**).”*

Connections to Daniel — The same Beast

The beast of **Revelation 17** is the same figure Daniel saw in vision six centuries earlier. The continuity of prophetic revelation across both testaments is one of Scripture’s most compelling arguments for divine authorship.

Daniel’s Vision	Revelation 17	Shared Feature
Daniel 7:7 — beast with ten horns	Revelation 17:3 — beast with ten horns	Ten horns = ten kings (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 17:12)
Daniel 7:8 — little horn, speaking great things	Revelation 13:5 — mouth speaking blasphemies	Blasphemous speech against God

Daniel 7:21 — war with the saints	Revelation 17:6 — drunk with blood of saints	Persecution of God's people
Daniel 7:25 — time, times, half a time	Revelation 13:3-42 months	3.5 years of beast's dominion
Daniel 7:26 — dominion taken away	Revelation 19:20 — beast into lake of fire	Certain destruction by divine decree
Daniel 9:27 — covenant confirmed then broken	Revelation 17:16 — beast destroys the harlot	The beast's ultimate betrayal

What this passage reveals about God?

1. God insists His people understand, not merely witness.

The angel does not rebuke John for being present at the vision. He rebukes him for failing to evaluate correctly what he sees. He does not leave His people to be swept away by the spectacle of evil.

John 16:13, *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

2. God's sovereignty is complete — even over Satan's masterpiece.

The beast will ‘go to perdition.’ His trajectory is declared before it begins. Even the Antichrist at the height of his power is operating within God's sovereign boundaries.

Isaiah 46:10, *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”*

3. God's electing grace is the believer's ultimate protection.

In **Revelation 17:8**, election is not merely a theological doctrine for seminar rooms — it is a matter of eternal survival. The name written before the foundation of the world is not erased by any power below or above.

John 10:28–29, *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.”*

Application

1. Examine the quality of your astonishment.

If the world can still astonish you more than the cross, the resurrection, or the throne of God — the angel's rebuke is addressed to you.

2. Recognise counterfeit resurrection.

Any movement that claims resurrection power without the risen Christ offers a lesser expression of the same satanic principle the beast will embody in full. Real resurrection produces repentance, holiness, and submission to God's Word.

2 Corinthians 11:14, *“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”*

3. Rest in the security of the Book of Life.

The struggle of the Christian life does not ultimately depend on the strength of your grip on Christ. It depends on the strength of His grip on you.

Revelation 3:5, *“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”*

4. Pray urgently for those whose names are not yet confirmed.

The sovereignty of God in election does not eliminate the urgency of evangelism — it undergirds it. We do not know whose names are written. We are called to proclaim the gospel to every person.

2 Peter 3:9, *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*

5. Do not fear the beast.

He ascends from the pit. He goes to perdition. The God who wrote your name before time began will outlast every manifestation of satanic power. The beast is already finished — the verdict was written before his story began.

Revelation 17:17, *For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.*

Conclusion — The Name That Was Written

✦ Schindler's List — Oskar Schindler, Kraków, 1944

*In 1944, as the final liquidation of the **Kraków ghetto** approached, **Oskar Schindler** sat down with his accountant and began compiling a list. Every name on that list represented a person who would be removed from the machinery of death and placed under his direct protection.*

Those on the list lived.

Those not on the list faced the camps.

Their survival was not the result of their own effort or resources. It was the result of a name and someone else's decision, made in their favour, at great cost.

The Book of Life is the ledger of eternity.

The names were not written because of the merit of those listed but they were written by the sovereign grace of God before the world began and sealed by the blood of the Lamb.

The beast will ascend from the pit. He will go to perdition. And not one name written before the foundation of the world will go with him.

‘It is done’ is the final word of the old creation. ‘Behold, I make all things new’ is the first word of the new. And that new creation is where every person who knows Christ is headed.

A personal appeal:

- If you are in Christ, your name is written — not in pencil but in the blood of the Lamb. Stop marvelling at what the world offers. You have been shown the mystery. Live accordingly.
- If you have not trusted Christ — your name's absence from the Book of Life is not yet final. The invitation is still open. Repent. Believe. The Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world was slain for you.
- For everyone in this room:
‘Why do you marvel?’
What is still impressing you more than the risen Christ?

Name it. Come out of it. Fix your eyes where they belong.

Does ‘from the foundation of the world’ modify the writing or the slaying?

Both as simultaneously true: names were written in the eternal decree before creation, and the Lamb's sacrifice was determined before creation (**1 Peter 1:19–20**). Either reading establishes that salvation is rooted in God's eternal purpose, not in the contingency of human decision.

Can a person's name be blotted out of the Book of Life?

Revelation 3:5, *'I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.'* The Greek construction is a strong double negation 'I will by no means ever blot out his name.'

'The Book of Life written before the foundation of the world is not subject to revision based on human performance.

The consistent testimony of Scripture is eternal security for the genuinely regenerate (**John 10:28–29; Romans 8:38–39; Philippians 1:6**).'