



Revelation 17:9–14

The Seven Heads and Ten Kings — The Beast and His Coalition

THE SEVEN BOWL JUDGEMENTS

Revelation 17:9–10 | The Seven Heads — Seven Mountains and Seven Kings

“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.

Revelation 17:11 | The Beast — The Eighth King

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

Revelation 17:12–14 | The Ten Horns — Ten Kings

“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. ¹³ These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Where are we?

The Angel continues his interpretation

In **verses 7–8**, the angel rebuked John’s marvelling and introduced the beast’s three-tense existence. The foundation has been laid: the beast is a satanic counterfeit, his rise is certain, his end is perdition.

V 9–14, the angel moves from character to coalition.

The seven heads are identified.

The ten horns are given their meaning.

The passage ends not with the beast’s triumph but with the Lamb’s.

V 9 opens with a unique phrase: *‘Here is the mind which has wisdom.’* This is not casual, but a direct summons to engaged, Spirit-illuminated thinking.

The passage rewards those who come to it with their minds engaged and their Bibles open.

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	The rebuke of marvelling + the beast’s three-tense identity.
V 9–14 — THIS PASSAGE	The seven heads (seven mountains and seven kings) and

	ten horns (ten kings) explained. Ends with the Lamb's victory.
V 15–18	The harlot's fate. The beast and ten kings destroy her. God's purpose fulfilled.

♦ **The room that requires wisdom — Alan Turing, Bletchley Park, 1940**

*At Bletchley Park during World War II, the cryptanalysts faced a system — the **Enigma machine** — that was designed to produce overwhelming confusion. Every message was encrypted, re-encrypted, and scrambled through rotating wheels and plug-boards.*

The untrained observer saw only noise. But the trained analyst, with the right framework and discipline, saw structure beneath the chaos — patterns that pointed to meaning.

The angel opens verse 9 with the equivalent of a classified briefing: 'Here is the mind which has wisdom.' He is not speaking to casual observers. He is speaking to those willing to sit down, apply thought, and read the pattern.

Revelation 17:9–14 is a decryption. The seven heads and ten horns are not decoration.

They are a map of what is coming. God has given His people both the vision and the key.

Revelation 17:9–10 — The Seven Heads: Mountains and Kings

The call to wisdom:

‘Here is the mind which has wisdom’

This phrase occurs only twice in Revelation: here in **Revelation 17:9** and in **13:18** (the number of the beast). Both passages involve the beast. Both require active, spiritually illumined intelligence.

It is an implicit rebuke of passive Christianity. The God who gave this vision expects His people to think hard about what the world’s system is doing and where it is headed.

Ignorance of prophetic Scripture is not neutrality — it is vulnerability.

*“Here is the mind which has wisdom’ — In the Greek it is the mind which holds (or possesses) wisdom. Wisdom here is not mere intellectual capacity but Spirit-granted discernment (**1 Corinthians 2:14**).*

The angel is not saying: think harder.

He is saying: those who have the Spirit’s gift of discernment will understand what follows. It is both an invitation and a filter.

*The same double function operates in **Daniel 12:10**, Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*

The elect understands.

The earth-dwellers marvel.

Revelation draws the same line.

The Seven Mountains

V 9, *'The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.'*

The most common interpretation historically identifies these mountains with **Rome, the city of seven hills**, well known throughout the ancient world. For John's first-century readers, this would have been unmistakable.

Three main interpretive positions:

- **Rome as the immediate referent.**

Seven hills = the city of Rome.

The harlot represents the Roman Empire's religious and political system in John's Day. Valid historically, but the chapter's scope extends beyond Rome.

- **Mountains as kingdoms.** In Scripture, mountains frequently symbolise kingdoms and world powers (**Daniel 2:35, 44; Jeremiah 51:25; Zechariah 4:7**).

The mountains here may represent the totality of world-empire power rather than a literal geography.

- **Both/and.** Rome is the immediate, historically grounded reference.

But the harlot is not confined to Rome. She is the principle of godless world power that Rome embodied and that will culminate in the final world empire.

Rome is the type. The end-time system is the antitype.

“The seven mountains almost certainly point to Rome in the first instance. But the passage’s horizon is clearly eschatological. The ten kings of verse 12 have ‘not yet’ received their kingdoms. John’s vision is anchored in his own moment but aimed at the end. The woman sits on the world’s great power structures across the whole age. Rome was the model; the final empire is the destination.”

The Seven Kings

V 9–10, *“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.*

The seven heads are both mountains and kings — a dual identification. The kings represent the succession of world-empire powers through which Satan has exercised his dominion over history.

King / Empire	Status (from John’s perspective)
1. Egypt	Fallen — Israel enslaved, then delivered
2. Assyria	Fallen — Northern Kingdom destroyed
3. Babylon	Fallen — Jewish exile and return
4. Persia	Fallen — superseded by Greece
5. Greece (Macedon)	Fallen — superseded by Rome

6. Rome	‘One is’ — the present empire in John’s day
7. The Final Empire	‘Not yet come’ — the end-time world power; continues a short time

The phrase **‘he must continue a short time’** is deliberate and compassionate. The final empire’s reign is **divinely limited**. God does not grant the beast an open-ended dominion. Even the worst chapter of human history comes with a divine time-stamp.

***Daniel 2:21**, ‘He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.’*

*The succession of empires — **Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the final beast-empire** — is not the random chaos of history. It is the controlled unfolding of God’s sovereign purposes. Each empire rose under His permission. Each fell by His decree.*

Revelation 17:11 — The Beast: The Eighth King

V 11, ‘The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.’

The Enigma of the Eighth

This is one of the most compressed and densely theological statements in Revelation.

Three observations:

1. He is the eighth, yet of the seven.

The beast is not simply the seventh king continued. He is something new — **the eighth** — the final embodiment of all that came before him. The seven world empires distilled into one final form.

The phrase *‘of the seven’* connects him to the whole history of satanic world-empire. He is the culmination, not merely the continuation. All the oppression, blasphemy, and persecution of every previous empire is concentrated in him.

2. He is the beast that was and is not.

The three-tense description from **verse 8** returns.

The beast’s apparent death and ascent from the abyss (the ‘mortal wound’ of **Revelation 13:3**) is the satanic imitation of resurrection.

The eighth king is the beast in his post-‘resurrection’ form, what appears to be a new creation is the old counterfeit renewed.

“The eighth is both continuous with the seven and discontinuous from them. He is not merely Rome returned or Babylon revived — he is the final, fully empowered expression of what every previous world empire partially embodied.

The difference between the seventh and the eighth is the difference between a type and its fulfilment. The harlot rode the

beast (v.3) — but in verse 11 the beast has moved beyond what she can contain.”

2 Thessalonians 2:9, *‘The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.’*

3. He is going to perdition.

The verse ends where it began, with the beast’s certain destiny. For the third time in this chapter (**V 8, 11**), the Spirit marks the beast with **perdition**.

Repetition in Scripture is emphasis. God will not allow His people to forget. **The beast’s power is real, but temporary and his end is irreversible.**

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 cast alive into the lake of fire.

The verdict of **verse 11** is the sentence carried out in **chapter 19**.

Revelation 17:12–14 — The Ten Kings and the Lamb’s Victory

The Ten Horns — Ten Kings

V 12, *‘The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.’*

The ten horns of **Daniel 7:7, 24** and **Revelation 13:1** are now interpreted. These are ten kings who rise in the final period of history — **not yet present in John’s day** but certain in God’s purposes.

Feature	Significance
No kingdom as yet	These are end-time rulers. John’s readers knew no such coalition. Their rise is future.
Authority for one hour	Their reign is strictly limited. ‘One hour’ = brief, Divinely circumscribed duration.
Kings with the beast	They do not operate independently. Their power is derivative from and surrendered to the beast.
One mind	Unprecedented political unity. Ten separate powers, one will. This is the beast’s most powerful political weapon.

The phrase **‘one hour’** (*miān hōran*) is not a precise clock unit but denotes brevity and divine control. The same word is used in **Revelation 18:10, 17, 19** of Babylon’s sudden destruction.

The beast’s coalition rises quickly and falls permanently.

Daniel 7:24, *‘The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings.’*

“The ten kings represent the final geopolitical configuration of history — whether a literal ten-nation coalition or a representative number indicating complete and total political consolidation around the beast.

What is certain is this: the world’s rulers, who have always protected their own sovereignty, will surrender it entirely to the Antichrist. History has never seen this. It will happen once, briefly, and then it will be over.”

They Give Their Power to the Beast

V 13, *‘These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.’*

This is the most complete voluntary surrender of sovereignty ever recorded in prophecy.

Kings who have their own power and authority **freely give it** to the beast. This is the counterfeit of the Church’s submission to Christ a dark echo of **Philippians 2:10–11** twisted into satanic obedience.

Three observations about this coalition:

- **It is satanically engineered.** The unity of ten kings who would otherwise compete is supernatural, the working of the same spirit that empowers the beast.
- **It is temporary.** V 17 will reveal that God Himself puts it into their hearts. Even this coalition serves the divine purpose. They do not know they are instruments of judgment.
- **It ends in the beast turning on the harlot.** The same coalition that empowers the beast in V 12–13 is used to destroy the harlot in V 16. Even Satan’s allies are not safe from Satan.

They Make War with the Lamb

V 14, *‘These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.’*

This is the climax of the passage. After six verses of identifying the beast, his kings, and his power, the angel places one sentence against all of it:

‘The Lamb will overcome them.’

1. The War.

The beast and ten kings make **war with the Lamb**. This is the war of **Revelation 19:19 — the final battle, Armageddon** seen here from the perspective of those who initiate it. They come to fight the returning Christ.

The audacity is staggering. A coalition of temporary, creature-kings going to war against the One who spoke creation into being. The warfare used is armed, deliberate, organised military conflict against the Lamb.

2. The Victory.

The verb is simple and absolute: **‘the Lamb will overcome them’**. Future tense, single verb, no conditions.

The outcome is not in doubt.

The Lamb who was slain holds the title deed to this war’s result.

***Revelation 19:11–16**, Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

The title ‘Lord of lords and King of kings’ in verse 14 is the identical title on His robe in 19:16.

The passage in chapter 17 announces the outcome; chapter 19 narrates its execution.

The believer who reads verse 14 knows how history ends before it ends.”

3. The Title: Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

This title occurs twice in **Revelation 17:14** and in **19:16**.

The context of **17:14** is striking. It comes not at the moment of victory but at the moment when the beast’s coalition appears at its most formidable. The title is not a victory announcement. It is a pre-battle declaration.

God does not reassure His people after the fact. He names the outcome before the battle. The ten kings give their authority to the beast, but no one has ever given authority to the Lamb that He did not already possess.

The Beast’s Coalition (V 12–13)	The Lamb and His Company (V 14)
Ten kings with temporary authority	The Lord of lords and King of kings — eternal authority
Receive power for one hour	Has had all power from eternity

One mind in service of the beast	Called, chosen, and faithful secured by sovereign grace
Give their authority to the beast	Cannot lose what was given from the foundation of the world
Go to perdition	Overcome forever

Those Who Are with Him: Called, Chosen, and Faithful

V 14, *‘...and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.’*

The verse does not end with the Lamb’s victory alone. It names those who are with Him.

Three words carry the whole architecture of salvation:

- **Called (klētoi).** Effectually called by God out of darkness into His marvellous light (**Romans 8:30; 1 Peter 2:9**). Not those who responded to a general invitation, but those whose response was itself produced by divine calling.
- **Chosen (eklektoi).** The elect. Named before the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 1:4**). The same sovereign grace that kept the earth-dwellers’ names *out* of the Book of Life placed the names of the elect *in* it.
- **Faithful (pistoι).** Those who persevered. Not the starting-line of faith but the finishing-line.

Called and chosen are God's work. Faithful describes the fruit it produces. Those with the Lamb are those who endured.

Romans 8:30, *'Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.'*

"Called, chosen, and faithful is the golden chain of redemption from the angle of the final battle. The same three words that describe the believer's position in God's eternal purpose are the credentials of those standing with the Lamb against the beast's coalition.

The beast assembles by force and surrender.

The Lamb is accompanied by those who have been secured by grace and proven faithful in the trial."

Connections to Daniel — The Same Vision Across the Centuries

Daniel's Vision	Revelation 17:9–14	Shared Feature
Daniel 2:44 — ten toes of iron and clay	Revelation 17:12 — ten kings of the final empire	The final empire is a coalition of ten, partially strong, partially fragile
Daniel 7:7 — beast with ten horns	Revelation 17:3, 12 — beast with ten horns = ten kings	Ten horns = ten kings (Dan 7:24; Rev 17:12)
Daniel 7:8 — little horn subdues three kings	Revelation 17:11 — the beast is the	The final beast rises from within and supersedes the coalition

	eighth, of the seven	
Daniel 7:11 — beast slain, body burned	Revelation 17:11; 19:20 — beast goes to perdition	Certain destruction by divine decree
Daniel 7:13–14 — Son of Man given dominion	Revelation 17:14 — Lamb overcomes as King of kings	Ultimate dominion belongs to God’s Anointed, not the beast
Daniel 7:27 — the saints possess the kingdom	Revelation 17:14 — called, chosen, faithful with the Lamb	The redeemed share in the final victory

What this passage reveals about God?

1. God names the outcome before the battle begins.

The Lamb has not yet returned in **chapter 17**, the ten kings have just received their authority. But the angel already declares: *‘the Lamb will overcome them.’* God does not wait for history to conclude before announcing its end.

Isaiah 46:10, *‘Declaring the end from the beginning.’*

2. God’s sovereignty extends to the enemy’s coalition.

The ten kings who give their power to the beast do so because **God put it into their hearts (V 17)**. Even the beast’s most formidable

geopolitical achievement is an instrument of divine purpose. Satan assembles his greatest army on God's timetable.

3. God's people are identified before the conflict, not after.

The called, chosen, and faithful are *with the Lamb* before the war is fought. Their position in the victory is not a reward for the fight — it is the ground from which they fight. Assurance precedes endurance.

John 16:33, *'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'*

The same grammar: present tense certainty ('I have overcome') given to disciples who have not yet faced what is coming. The Lamb's victory is declared in advance so that His people can stand in the battle.

Application

1. Cultivate the mind that has wisdom.

V 9 begins with a call to engaged intelligence.

Christianity is not a religion of passive emotion or unexamined tradition. God reveals the mystery and calls His people to think carefully about it. Read prophetic Scripture. Understand the time.

2 Timothy 2:7, *'Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.'*

2. Do not be impressed by unified power that excludes God.

The ten kings are **‘of one mind’** and they give their authority to the beast. The world will call this historic achievement that the greatest political unity in human history. But what unifies around the wrong centre is not a sign of health; it is a sign of the end.

When global systems consolidate power in ways that bypass God, the discerning believer does not marvel but they interpret. The bigger the coalition, the shorter the reign.

3. The Lamb’s victory is your victory — not because of what you have done, but because of who you are with.

The verse does not say: *‘those with Him are strong, armed, and victorious.’*

It says: **‘called, chosen, and faithful.’**

Two of those three words are entirely God’s work. The third is the fruit of the first two. Your standing in this victory is rooted in sovereign grace, not in personal performance.

Romans 8:37, *‘Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.’*

4. Faithful is a present-tense calling.

The called and chosen are also **faithful**. This passage is not addressed to those who are waiting for the great battle — it is addressed to those living faithfully now, in ordinary time, with ordinary pressures.

The same faithfulness that marks those who stand with the Lamb at the end is the faithfulness required today.

Where does your faithfulness need strengthening?

In your marriage, your church attendance, your financial integrity, your witness to colleagues? Those who are faithful in small things are being shaped for an eternal standing.

Pray for the nations.

The ten kings are as yet nameless and unreached. **God has put it into their hearts** to fulfil His purpose, but we do not know which nations, which leaders, which generations are in view. Intercession for the nations is not naive optimism. It is cooperation with God's sovereign plan.

Conclusion — The Lamb Has Already Won

◆ D-Day and V-Day — Normandy, 1944

*The historian Oscar Cullmann used the analogy of D-Day and V-Day to describe the relationship between the cross and the Second Coming. On D-Day (**6 June 1944**), the decisive battle of the Second World War was fought and won. The outcome was no longer in doubt. But V-Day — the formal, public, ceremonial announcement of total victory — did not come until **May 1945**.*

In the months between D-Day and V-Day, the enemy continued to fight. Soldiers continued to die. Cities continued to burn. The war was real. The suffering was real. But the outcome had been decided.

The cross is D-Day. *The beast and his ten kings are the enemy's final, desperate campaign between the decisive battle and the public victory.*

***Revelation 17:14** is the announcement: the Lamb will overcome them. Not might overcome. Not may overcome. Will. The decisive battle was fought on a hill outside Jerusalem two thousand years ago. The public victory comes when He returns.*

A personal appeal:

- **If you are in Christ** — you are called, chosen, and faithful. Not because of your consistency, but because of His. When the beast and his coalition come, your standing is not based on your grip on Christ but on His grip on you. Stand firm. Endure. He has already overcome.
- **If you have not trusted Christ** — the only two sides in this passage are the beast's coalition and those with the Lamb. There is no third option, no neutral ground. The beast's coalition has the appearance of power and the certainty of perdition. The Lamb has the certainty of victory and the invitation of grace. The call is still open. Come to the One who overcomes.
- **For everyone in this room:** the mind which has wisdom knows that we live between D-Day and V-Day. The outcome is certain. Live in the light of it. Let it shape your courage, your witness, and your faithfulness today.

Theological Questions

Question	Notes
Are the ten kings a literal ten-nation coalition or a symbolic number?	Both positions are held by serious scholars. A symbolic reading sees ‘ten’ as completeness — full and total geopolitical surrender to the beast. A literal reading expects a specific ten-nation alliance. Either way, the theological point is the same: the world’s rulers cede their sovereignty to the beast voluntarily.
Who are the seven mountains — literal Rome or symbolic empires?	Rome is the immediate historical referent — unmistakable to first-century readers. But the passage’s eschatological horizon (ten kings not yet come) points beyond Rome to a final world system. Both referents coexist: Rome is the type, the final empire is the antitype.
Is the beast a revived Roman Empire specifically?	Many premillennial scholars (Walvoord, Thomas, Fruchtenbaum) identify the beast’s empire as a revived Rome based on Daniel 2 and 7. Others hold a broader view — a final world empire not geographically confined to Rome’s boundaries. The beast’s connection to the seventh king (‘of

	the seven') suggests continuity with Rome's spirit if not its geography.
'Called, chosen, and faithful' — does 'faithful' condition election?	No. The order is significant: called and chosen are the divine foundation; faithful is the fruit. This mirrors Romans 8:29–30 where predestination, calling, justification, and glorification are all God's acts. Faithfulness is the evidence of election, not its cause.
Is Armageddon in view in verse 14?	The phrase 'make war with the Lamb' anticipates Revelation 19:19 where the beast and kings 'gathered together to make war' against the rider on the white horse. Revelation 17:14 is the prophetic announcement. Revelation 19 is its historical execution.