REVELATION 17

Mystery Babylon, the Harlot on the Beast

> *“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”*
> REVELATION 17:14

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · WITH TSARFATI · MACARTHUR · GUZIK · JEREMIAH

Where John has brought us

1. Chapter 16 announced Babylon's fall in a single line: "Babylon the great was remembered before God" (16:19).

2. Guzik reads the two chapters as two faces of one Babylon, intertwined but judged at different moments: chapter 17 is religious Babylon, chapter 18 commercial Babylon.

Revelation's two women — and the Bride

THE WOMAN · CH 12	THE HARLOT · CH 17	THE BRIDE · CH 19, 21
		
clothed with the sun bears the Child hunted by the dragon kept in the wilderness	purple, scarlet, gold a cup of abominations drunk on saints' blood rides the scarlet beast	fine linen, bright and clean made herself ready the Lamb's wife
Israel · 12:1–6	**burned by the beast · 17:16**	**with the Lamb · 19:7–8**

The Great Harlot on the Scarlet Beast

False religion in purple and gold, drunk on holy blood

REVELATION 17:1

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik traces a stream of false worship back to Babel — the Tammuz cult and the "queen of heaven" of Jeremiah and Ezekiel — and warns against shrinking the harlot down to one institution.

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur calls her the final form of false religion, the devil's last and most successful lie.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati reads "sits on many waters" as worldwide reach — she rules over peoples and nations, not one region — a real, global, end-times religious system.

πόρνη
PORNĒ · "HARLOT"

A prostitute. With porneia (G4202) and porneuō (G4203), "immorality" and "commit immorality," it runs through the whole chapter.

The Mystery of the Beast

Seven heads, seven kings — and an eighth who goes to destruction

REVELATION 17:10

and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik calls verse 10 one of the most difficult in Revelation and refuses to force it.

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur notes that the angel's explanation centers on the beast, not the woman, because he is the real power.

AMIR TSARFATI

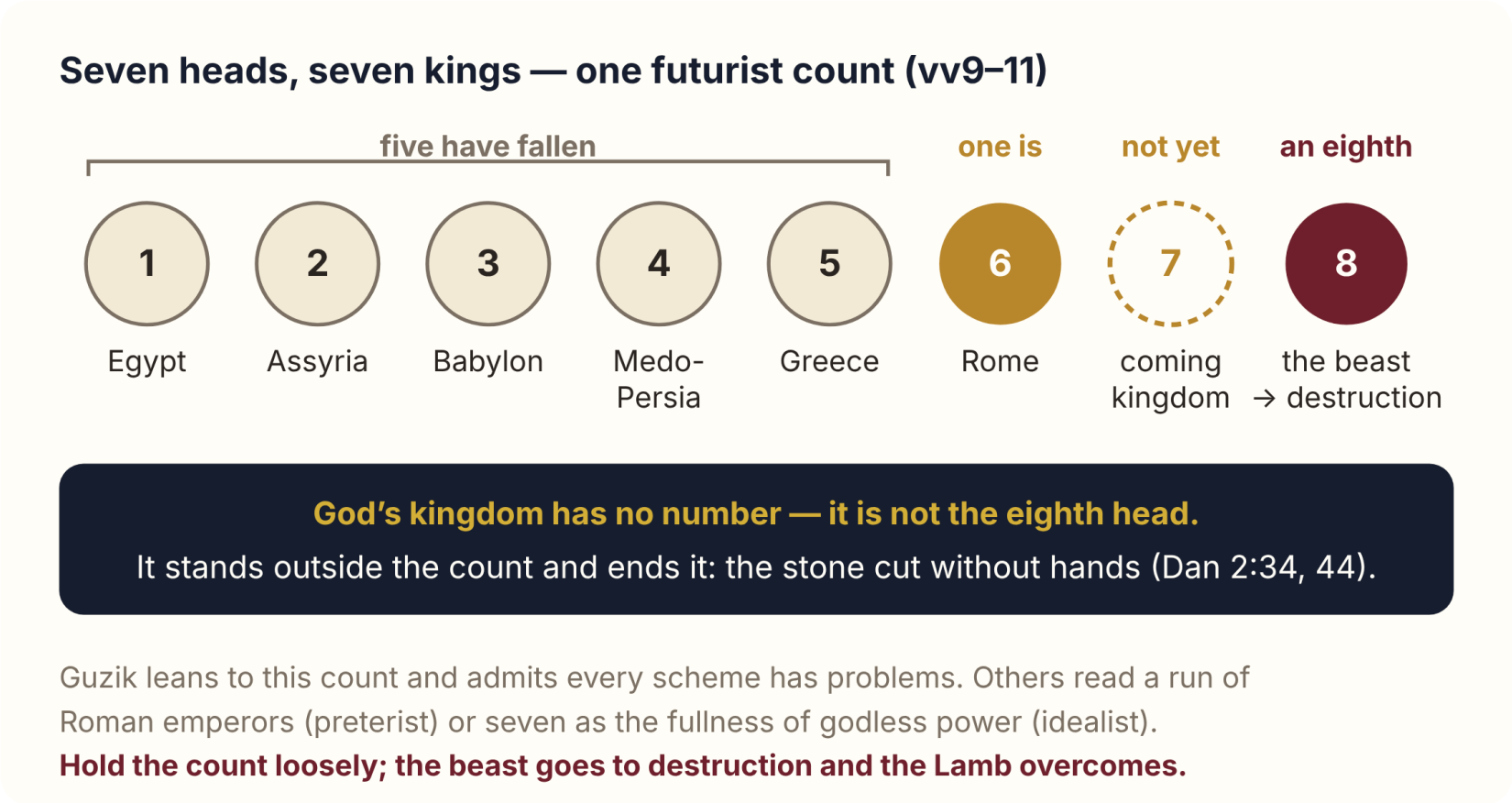
Tsarfati reminds us that when the Bible speaks of the nations, it speaks of them in relationship to Israel.

ἀπώλεια

APŌLEIA · "DESTRUCTION"

Ruin, perdition — the word behind Paul's "son of destruction" (2 Thess 2:3).

Seven Heads, Seven Kings



One common futurist count of verses 9–11, the one Guzik leans to — held loosely, with God's kingdom standing outside the count.

Ten Kings and the Lamb

One hour, one purpose — and the Lamb overcomes

REVELATION 17:14

"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

DAVID JEREMIAH

Jeremiah underlines verse 14 above everything else in the chapter. The ten kings reign "one hour" with the beast, but before the war is even fought, its outcome is filed in heaven: the Lamb wins.

JOHN MACARTHUR

For MacArthur, "the Lamb will overcome them" is stated as an accomplished fact before the battle is even joined — that is how certain God's Word is.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik sees the ten kings echoing the ten toes of Daniel's image, likely a ten-nation confederation.

κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί
KLĒTOI · EKLEKTOI

Three words describe the Lamb's army in verse 14. Klētoi: called, summoned by grace.

The Harlot Hated, God's Hand Revealed

The beast devours his rider — on God's schedule

REVELATION 17:17

"For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

DAVID JEREMIAH

Jeremiah places the harlot's fall at the midpoint of the tribulation.

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur hears the Old Testament's formula for the execution of a harlot — desolated, stripped, devoured, burned (Ezek 16, 23).

DAVID GUZIK

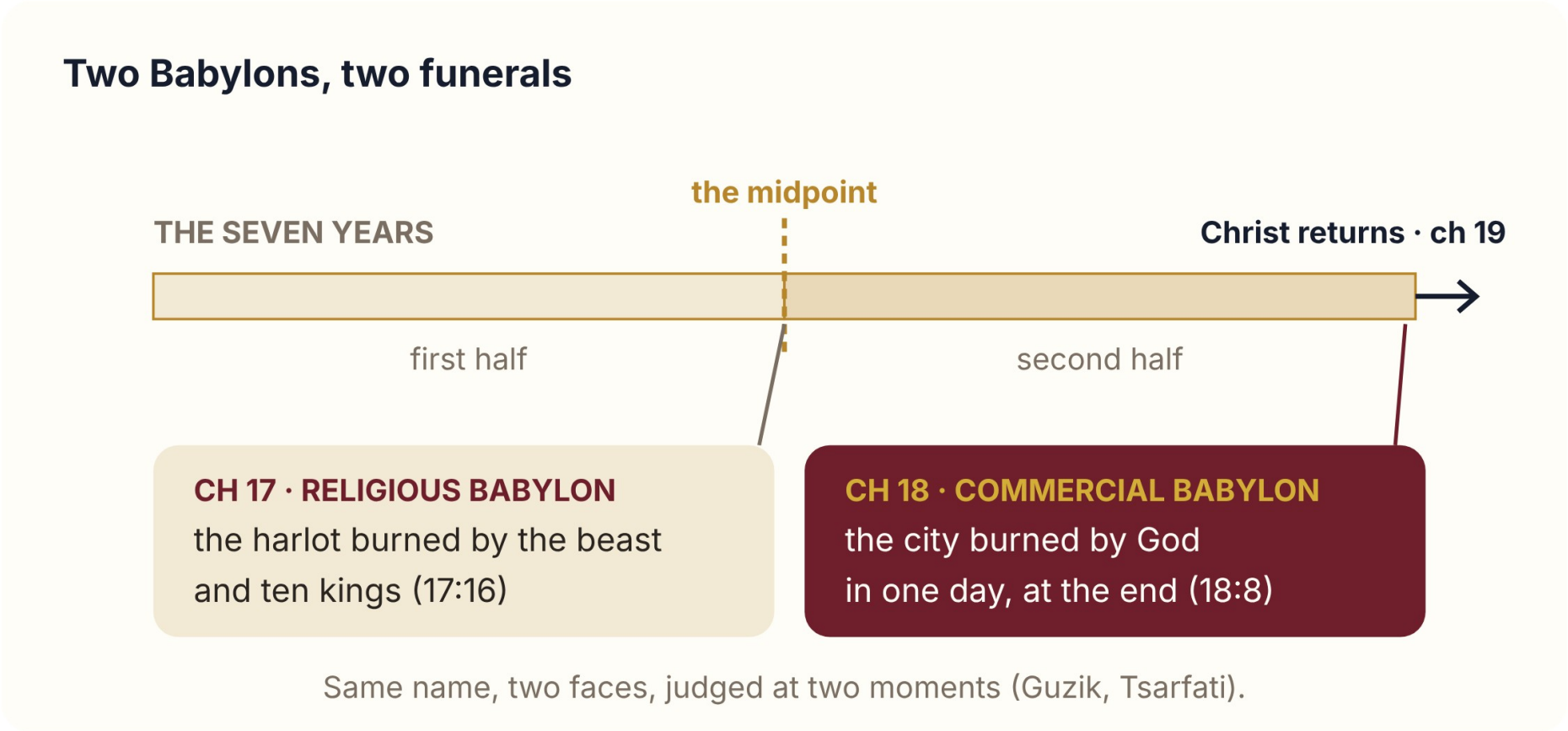
Guzik calls it the tyrant's oldest playbook: use religion, then discard it. God here uses one wicked power to judge another, and the ten kings become the unwitting executioners of religious Babylon.

ἐρημόω

ERĒMOŌ · "MAKE DESOLATE"

To lay waste, to make a wilderness, to strip bare. It shares its root with erēmos (G2048), the very wilderness where John first saw her (v3).

Two Babylons, Two Funerals



Religious Babylon is burned by the beast and his kings around the midpoint; commercial Babylon is burned by God at the end.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Scripture decodes its own symbol.

The many waters are “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” (v15) — a truly worldwide religion.

2

A rider only borrows strength.

At first religion steers the beast; by the end, government and money are the power brokers.

3

Deception dresses well.

The last lie will not look pagan and monstrous; it will look religious, respectable and irresistible.

4

Drunk both ways.

Methuō (G3184): the nations are drunk on her wine (v2), and she is drunk on the saints’ blood (v6).

More to carry

5

The worst enemy of true religion.

With Walvoord: false religion is always the worst enemy of true religion — religious men handed Jesus over.

6

A counterfeit resurrection.

The beast who was, is not and will come parodies the eternal Christ — and his obituary is written beside his rise.

7

The kingdom without a number.

Every power here is counted, and everything counted runs out; Christ's kingdom stands outside the count (Dan 2:44).

8

Evil on a leash.

God put it in their hearts (v17): even the harlot's destruction runs only until the words of God are fulfilled.

Talk it through

1. The woman sits on the scarlet beast (v3). Who is really in control — and what does verse 16 say about religion that climbs onto political power?

2. Why was John so astonished (v6) that the persecution of believers came from religion?

3. The angel says the heads take a mind with wisdom (v9). How do we hold firm conviction about what is plain and humility about what is only sketched?

4. Who stands with the Lamb in verse 14 — and which of those three words is your part?

5. God put it in their hearts to execute His purpose (v17). What comfort does God's rule over evil men give you this week?

CLOSING

Religion will be used and then burned; the Lamb will be worshiped forever. Do not settle for a faith the world would still find convenient. Be found among the called and chosen and faithful, while it is still called today.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides, reflection journal and film: see the Revelation study page.