

Toward Identifying the Man of Lawlessness

(vv. 9-11)

VERSE 9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom (ὧδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν [*adv hode here + art.w/noun nom.m.s. nous mind, intellect + art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo have + noun acc.f.s. sophia*])).

The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits (αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰὶ ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν, ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ' αὐτῶν. [*art.w/adj.nom.f.p. hepta seven + noun nom.f.p. kephale head + adj.nom.nt.p. hepta seven + noun nom.nt.p. horos mountain + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi "are" + adv opou where; "on which" + art.w/noun nom.f.s. gune woman + pres.dep.ind.3s. kathemai sit + prep epi + pro.gen.nt.p. autos "on them"*])).

VERSE 10 "and they are seven kings (καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν [*conj and + noun nom.m.p. basileus king + adj.nom.m.p. hepta seven + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi "are"*]); **five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come** [οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν [*art.w/adj.nom.m.p. pente five + aor.act.ind.3p. pipto fall + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. eis one + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi "is" + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. allos another (same kind) + adv oupo not yet + aor.act.ind.3s. erchomai come*]]; **and when he comes, he must remain a little while** [καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μένειν [*conj kai + adv hotan when + aor.act.subj.3s. erchomai come + adj.\adv oligon little + pro.acc.m.s. autos here in oblique sense referring to an expressed or implied antecedent + pres.act.ind.3s. dei to bind; must + aor.act.infin. meno abide, remain*]])

ANALYSIS: VERSES 9-10

1. The header for this section to the end of the chapter is supplied by the angel as: "Here is the mind which has wisdom."
2. Acquiring wisdom (e.g. divine viewpoint) is the first principal of wisdom (cf. Prov. 4:7 "The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding." Cf. also Prov. 1:7; 2:2, 6,7; 3:13; 8:1-14; 9:10; 10:31; 11:2; 15:33; 16:16; 18:1).
3. This header constitutes an offer or invitation to John and all who would contemplate these matters.
4. In 13:18 a similar expression is used after the prophetic data is presented while here it comes before the exposition.

5. Only those who latch on to the divine identification of the details can it be said that they have wisdom.
6. The mind/intellect that grasps the intended meaning of these symbols is the mind that has fellowship with the One who is the Author of these things.
7. What follows to the end of this chapter is not in the form of a vision.
8. These verses are rather an explanation or commentary on the vision.
9. The key to wisdom with respect to the seven heads is that they are seven mountains on which the woman sits.
10. This has been the subject of much debate.
11. To say that the seven heads are seven emperors makes no sense in light of verse 10 where five have fallen and one is.
12. The emperor when John wrote in c. 96AD was Domitian the last of the Flavian Emperors and counting back five emperors from him we come to Galba, which leaves out all of the Julio-Claudian line (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero).
13. Even if we dispense with Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, who ruled briefly we would have to leave out Tiberius and Augustus.
14. The only way we could make this fit is to redate the Book of Revelation to the reign of Nero of which there is no support.
15. Not to mention the fact that there were many emperors that followed Domitian (e.g. Nerva and Trajan, etc.).
16. The view that finds a geographical significance in the seven hills on which the city of Rome was built has had wide appeal.
17. Seven hills were the nucleus of the city on the left bank of the Tiber River.
18. Roman coinage and literature has made much of the city's topography.
19. This view is made nonsensical as there is no connection between seven hills in Rome and seven Roman emperors in the next verse.
20. This view gives the heads a double meaning, one geographical and the other political, but its most obvious flaw is its failure to make a distinction between the woman and the beast.
21. The view that has no such difficulties is the one that says the seven heads and mountains represent seven successive empires, headed by the seven kings of verse 10.
22. Each king is a personification of the many rulers who occupied the throne of these seven empires.
23. The first six kingdoms working backward is Rome (the "one is"), Greece, Medo-Persia, Babylon, Assyria and Egypt.
24. The seventh is the kingdom of the Beast which happens to be Rome revived according to Dan. 7:7-8, 19-24 (cf. 9:26).
25. The view that serves the text is that the seven kings represent seven literal Gentile kingdoms/empires that follow one another in succession.
26. Verse 10 provides confirmation of this match as seen in the words "five have fallen."
27. The five kingdoms of the past are five kingdoms who interacted with the Chosen People.
28. So the angel's clarifying word to John about the seven heads spans essentially the entire history of the Chosen People onward to the Church Age.
29. The future and final leader and his empire will have a short life span according to verse 10: "the other has not yet come. And when he comes he must remain a little while."
30. The "little while" constitutes the seven years of the Tribulation, which is a brief rule by any standard.

31. One more thing before we move on: the woman is said to sit on the seven mountains, indicating here presence as far back as at least the Egyptian dominance (1st head or mountain).
32. As noted many times mountains are employed in Biblical symbolism for major world powers while hills are used to illustrate lesser entities (Jer. 16:16; 50:6; 51:25).
33. The future kingdom of Christ is likened to a mountain (Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:35, 45).
34. We have seen the woman as sitting on many waters (Rev. 17:1); astride the beast with seven heads and ten horns (17:3) and here sitting on seven mountains suggesting here continuity from the ancient past into the prophetic future.
35. Here the woman is said to be sitting on seven mountains which corresponds to sitting on a beast having seven heads.
36. The seven mountains constitute six ancient empires plus a future kingdom/empire, the empire of the Beast or Antichrist.
37. Again, the seven in order are Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome and the Revived Roman Empire, known today as the European Union.
38. The seven mountains or heads correspond to seven series of autocrats/kings.
39. The various Pharaohs for instances constitute king or head number one, and so on.
40. The phrase “five are fallen” (οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν) is to be taken from the perspective of John’s era when Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia and Greece had ceased as the dominant Gentile world power.
41. And, “the one is” (ὁ εἷς ἔστιν) corresponds to the Roman Empire, head number six.
42. Finally, the third phrase, “the other has not yet come” (ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν) corresponds to the ascendancy of the Antichrist over the EU during the seven year tribulation.
43. Seven years is as very short time hence the words “and when he comes, he must remain a little while.”
44. The seven year tribulation satisfies this assertion.