

## Ezekiel 16 – Cause Jerusalem to Know Her Abomination

By Holly Effiom

VV1-3

What did God want Ezekiel to do?

Didn't Ezekiel 8 show Jerusalem's abomination?

Where was Jerusalem born?

Who was Canaan? Gen 10:6, 15

From what tribe was Jerusalem's father?

From what tribe was Jerusalem's mother?

According to Gen 10, how were the Amorites and Hittites (Gen 15:16; Gen 22; Deut 7:1) related?

According to Gen 9:20-29, what do we learn about Canaan's personality?

So, is God saying one's heritage could be an abomination?

What is God doing in this section of scripture?

**LESSON:** God wants Jerusalem to *know* her abomination. We've read in Ezekiel 8 about the abominations that were being practiced within the temple and the complete corruption of the leadership, women and men, including their children – Ezekiel was being made aware of the character of the “elders” who were sitting before him, while in exile. It is in chapter 14 that the reader is made to understand that God had a controversy with the elders of Israel.

Ezekiel 1 tells us that Ezekiel is the priest of Israel. The process of consecration of the priest is very complex and described in detail in Exodus 29. If the only acceptable place for worship is the temple in Jerusalem (Lev 17), then consecration of the priest can only be performed in the temple, as sacrifices are an integral part of the ceremony. This means that Ezekiel did not *become* the priest when he got to Babylon, he must have *been* the priest in the temple when he was taken captive to Babylon. What exactly did it mean to be the “priest” of Israel?

1. Only the priest “saw” – Interacted directly with – Almighty God. Ex 25:22
2. There was only one priest at a time. Ex 28:1-3
3. Only the priest bore the burden of all Israel before Almighty God, in the holy of holies. Ex 28:38
4. The priest is a direct descendent, a son, of Aaron son of Levi. Ex 29:44
5. Only the priest's sons could serve in the holy place. Ex 29:44
6. Only the priest would go into the holy of holies, and serve God *personally*; 30:17-22

Why rehearse all of this? Was Ezekiel completely unaware of the abominations taking place in the temple, under his watch? How is it possible that he would *not* know? This makes me suspect that perhaps Ezekiel 8 was for Ezekiel's own sake.

And yet, God wants Jerusalem to *know* her abomination. How could Jerusalem *not* know God; and not know of her transgression against Him, when the temple of God resided right in the midst of her? Jerusalem couldn't know God because she didn't know *herself*. So, He starts telling her about herself, commencing with her heritage.

Jerusalem was originally inhabited by the Jebusites, grandchildren of Canaan (firstborn of Ham). Genesis 9 tells us that Canaan had no regard for law and order, in his disrespect for his grandfather's (Noah's) position and privacy. Gen 10:15-16 describes Jerusalem's parents (Amorites and Hittites) as siblings. Lev 18:1-5 (the prologue to the section of the Law imparted to Moses, that speaks to the regulation of

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personal relationships among the children of Israel) provides a hint of the practices of the people of Canaan, in that there's a whole section of the Law dedicated to *not* doing what these people did.

VV4-6

- How does God describe the actions of love and caring?
- What is significant about the navel not being cut?
- What is significant about the baby not being washed?
- What does it mean to wash a baby?
- What does “salted” and swaddled show?
- Was Jerusalem loved and care for at her birth?
- Did anyone pity Jerusalem?
- What had the parents done to Jerusalem?
- Is being uncared for the abomination?
- What was God's response to what He saw?

**LESSON:** So, what do we learn about Jerusalem's heritage? Why is it important?

This is such a moving section of Ezekiel. God is describing the origins of Jerusalem as an aborted baby – He didn't care about its origins – He saw the individual – it didn't matter that she was Canaanite, God's perennial enemy.

Jerusalem was a child of Canaan, an unwanted child of the Amorites and Hittites (Gen 10:6-18). But God's heart toward Jerusalem was that she should live. He willed her to life and took action to save her life.

Consider the psychological effect of being unwanted by your parents – it breaks something within people. I have known people who have overcome this; and, I've known some who haven't. So, I guess, this is why this section of scripture touches me so deeply; and part of me is not surprised by Jerusalem's behavior. So, God found Jerusalem thrown in a field, unloved and unwanted, and He stops and picks her up and wills her to live.

VV7-8

- Did God just wash Jerusalem off and leave her? How do you know?
- What is meant by “ornaments”? Where was this description used before in Ezekiel? Eze 7:20
- What does Ezekiel use to convey the concepts of “ornaments” in this section of scripture?
- In what way are breasts and hair “ornaments”?
- Was God attracted to or stirred by Jerusalem's beauty? How do you know?
- Did God love Jerusalem? Ruth 3:3-9
- What does it mean to spread one's skirt over a person?
- What was Naomi instructing Ruth to do?

**LESSON:** God didn't just give Jerusalem her life, He Blessed her with increase and greatness with beautiful ornaments – her breasts and her hair had grown – compared to when He had first seen her naked, and vulnerable. God protected Jerusalem and provided for her needs, including her in His plans; bringing the people with whom He had made a covenant to reside in her midst. (Ex 25-29; Lev 8:6-9)

This section of scripture is *very* intimate – God is allowing us to see His heart in the manner in which He describes His desire and care for Jerusalem in terms of a man's desire for the woman he loves.

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On one hand, it makes me uncomfortable to consider... *TMI! TMI! TMI!* It's sort of like imaging your parents having sex! But, on the other hand, I can't help being deeply moved by the great privilege God is bestowing upon me to be given *insight* into the very heart of God Almighty... *Wow!*

VV9-14

When does God personally wash Jerusalem and anoint her with oil?  
When did God clothe Jerusalem with beautiful clothing (fine linen), and shoes?  
Did God only clothe Jerusalem with her needs? How do you know?  
When did God give Jerusalem bracelets and a chain about her neck; a jewel on her forehead, earrings, and a beautiful crown?  
Where did Jerusalem's beauty come from?

LESSON: When I read this section of scripture, it brings to mind the construction of the tabernacle (Lev 36-40), many of the items noted in this section were appointed to the children of Israel at that time. And, it occurred to me that this is a repetition. In VV6-7, God had first noticed Jerusalem polluted in her own blood from her birth, and He had placed her in the care of *others*, who had cleaned her up and tended to her needs.

In V9, God describes how He, *personally*, washed Jerusalem completely with water, and anointed her with oil. Was this not what Jesus had done for the church (Rev 1:5-6)? I believe this is an instance of God speaking to that end-time Gentile world power, whom He blessed abundantly through His own comeliness, His own blood.

Chapter 16 begins with God directing Ezekiel to make Jerusalem know her abominations and then sets about telling Ezekiel what to say. God wanted Jerusalem to understand the depths her offense, her *transgression*, at the time of this scripture, as well as, into the future.

It is not God's way to judge without warning, and without showing cause.

VV15-16

What does God say is the reason Jerusalem became a harlot?  
What does Jerusalem's "renown" have to do with her behavior?  
What is meant by "...his it was"?  
What did the relationship with Jerusalem mean to God?  
What did Jerusalem do with the garments God had given her?  
What is it to "...deck thy high places..."?  
Did Jerusalem have sex with her lovers upon her high places?

VV17-19

What does Jerusalem make with the jewels, gold, and silver God had given her?  
What is meant by "...images of men..."? Is God talking about an actual man or a facsimile of a man?  
How do you know?  
What does Jerusalem do with the images of men?  
What does Jerusalem do with the finely woven fabrics God had given her?  
What is meant by the act of setting God's "oil and incense" before these images of men?  
What is meant by a "sweet savour" offering? Lev 3:16

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VV20-22 (2 Ki 21; Jer 7; 19)

What is the *no small sin* that Jerusalem commits against God?

What was so egregious about this of all Jerusalem's sins?

What in this sin did God find so shocking, with regard to Jerusalem's own background?

**LESSON:** God gets very explicit in describing Jerusalem's harlotry. In VV 15-16, Jerusalem is impressed by her own beauty and renown, such that she took it for granted that it would always be; and she began to have sex with other men. Verses 17-19 describes how she creates a facsimile of a man (perhaps a phallic symbol) and has sex with that also; however, she takes her whoredom further in bowing her knee to that image she had created – she makes offerings, specifically reserved for God (her *husband*), to these idols.

In the first few chapters of Leviticus, God talks about the different kinds of offerings that were acceptable for the children of Israel to make, and they fell into 2 categories – the sweet savor and the non-sweet savor offerings. The *non-sweet savor* offering is done when there is a sin or trespass against a neighbor and God that requires atonement; the sweet savor offerings are done out of one's love of God. For today, you might think of it as all the things you do just because you love God, not because you are expecting anything in return... the "just because" offerings (Lev 1:1-3). Could this be what is meant by the daily sacrifices and oblations (Dan 8:14; Dan 9:27; Dan 11:31; Dan 12:11)?

It is painful to read that Jerusalem was making these offerings to something they had made with their own hands, something that is not God. That is bad, but to learn that she begins sacrificing God's children to these idols... I can almost hear God choking on these words, "... that thou hast slain my children..." and to think of the manner of their sacrifice – burnt on an altar of fire. It seems to be in dismay that God observes Jerusalem's lack of compassion on her own children, having completely forgotten her own origins.

As lurid as this rehearsal of Jerusalem's sins is, understand that this is an aggrieved spouse speaking, from a *deep* well of hurt, about His *faithless* wife, who has chosen idolatry over the love He has *proven* and offered and given. This is God Almighty speaking to the children of Israel – His words make me *weep*... and He is not even done yet!

VV23-25

Why does God pronounce two woes upon Jerusalem? Rev 8:30; Rev 9:12; Rev 11:14

How did Jerusalem take her wickedness to a new level?

What does it mean that Jerusalem had built "...an eminent place..."?

In what way can beauty be made abhorrent?

In what way does Jerusalem mar her own beauty, according to God Himself?

What does it mean to have "...opened thy feet..." to everyone that passed by?

Why is God being so very *plain-spoken*?

What does this mean in context of a nation?

**LESSON:** God's words are very hard for Jerusalem – pronouncing two woes upon her. I've wondered why God is being so blunt in describing Jerusalem's behavior, and I return to what He says to Ezekiel in the beginning of this chapter "...Cause Jerusalem to *know* her abominations..." and, it occurred to me, it wasn't just for edification through the *punishment*; apparently Jerusalem truly didn't *understand* her own

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behavior – regardless of the reasons, the feelings of unworthiness, not being wanted as a child, or whatever. Jerusalem was lost in her sin, not even understanding her transgression against God Almighty.

I remember years ago, when my husband and I were going through our own dark night, being distraught over the realization that my husband didn't know me *at all*... after 20 years of being together!

God had walked with these people out of Egypt, through the wilderness (whose time was extended through their own *hardheadedness*), through taking the Promised Land, through becoming one nation, through building the temple in Jerusalem – for *hundreds* of years – only to discover Jerusalem didn't know her God *at all*. Jerusalem constructed a high place to herself, to be worshiped by everyone that passed by, putting her harlotry on display to the world, and shamelessly calling it “virtue”.

VV26-29

Why does God call out Jerusalem's fornication with the Egyptians?

What is meant by “...great of flesh...”?

What does “...great of flesh...” mean in context of a nation?

What was God's response to Jerusalem's fornications?

How did the daughters of the Philistines feel about Jerusalem's behavior?

Who are the Philistines? Gen 10:13-14

Why does God call out the opinion of the daughters of the Philistines? Jud 2:13

With whom else did Jerusalem have relations?

Who are the Assyrians? Gen 10:11

What does God say is the reason for Jerusalem's relations with Assyrians?

In what area has Jerusalem multiplied her fornications?

**LESSON:** In this section of the Ezekiel 16, God begins to innumerate Jerusalem's lovers – well-endowed Egypt and Assyria, because Egypt just wasn't enough. It is noteworthy that God calls out the irony of the daughters of the Philistines thinking Jerusalem “lewd”, considering their own history.

Joshua, prior to death, oversaw the division of the land of Canaan (the Promised land) among the children of Israel. By the time we reach the book of the Judges – which describes the path of leadership as the children of Israel continued with the conquest of Canaan, it becomes obvious by chapter 2 that the children of Israel were having trouble staying away from idolatry. In Judges 2:13, they forsake God to serve Baal and Ashtaroah (plural of Ashtoreth; a conglomeration of various regional “goddesses” with similar characteristics). Ashtoreth or Ishtar is the name of the Phoenician (Canaan is believed to be the first “Phoenix”) goddess of war and fertility – the people gave her the title “queen of heaven”, which is mentioned in Jer 7:18; 44:25, etc.

The practices associated with the worship of Ashtoreth (Ishtar or Easter) included fertility rites and celebrations, temple prostitution, pouring libations, as well as burnt offerings, which included causing children “...to pass through fire...”, human sacrifice. Amazingly, they created a “ritual” to eliminate the proof of their harlotry! And, these ones consider Jerusalem's behavior “lewd”.

Even though Jerusalem had fornicated with everyone from “...Canaan to Chaldea...” she was still not satisfied. God describes her as insatiable.

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VV30-34

What does God mean in saying Jerusalem has a weak heart?

What does God call Jerusalem?

What actions symbolize the weakness of her heart?

What makes Jerusalem different from other harlots?

What is being differentiated in V32?

What is the connotation of being a “wife”?

Does Jerusalem receive gifts from her lovers?

What makes Jerusalem “contrary” from other harlots?

**LESSON:** How weak is your heart... I imagine God looking upon Jerusalem with a mixture of anger, disappointment, and pity – a woman, having been seduced by the here and now, who threw away what could have been, settling for merely being an “... imperious whorish woman...” wallowing in her own beauty and renown with those weaker than herself, worshiping her as she pays still others to pet her vanity. What did God see in “could have been”? Jerusalem will never know now.

How would Jerusalem’s characterization as a whore be manifested among the nations? A nation completely given over to its own pleasure, vain and self-centered, refusing to look upon, let alone help, a neighbor because its eyes are too full of itself. A nation constantly complaining about limits on its freedoms and each and every offense against its vanity, instead of being thankful for the freedom it enjoys and the plenty it has. A nation preoccupied with using the law to make its vices legal, and using its technologies to enhance its vices and minimize work, and then it complains about its weight problem.

And, because all of this wasn’t enough, a nation, bored with its plenty, sets out to do something about the people who makes it feel bad about itself and all its plenty – its own days of poverty and struggle long forgotten – it sets out to destroy these people who offend its own delusions of grandeur.

This act to destroy is *wickedness*; and, as Ezekiel 7 attests, judgment is not far behind. Imagine what could have been. This final Gentile world power will never know.

VV35-38

What does God mean in saying, “Wherefore, O harlot...”?

What is going to happen to Jerusalem as a result of her harlotries?

Who will God use as instruments of His judgment?

By what standard will God judge Jerusalem? Dt 22:22

VV39-43

Into who’s hands will Jerusalem be given?

What does it mean for her own “eminent place” to be thrown down?

What did we define her “eminent place” as being?

What will be stripped from Jerusalem?

What does it mean that a “company” will be brought against Jerusalem?

What else will be done to Jerusalem?

Why is it significant that God mentions the “...in the sight of many women...”?

What will this judgment and tumult do for God?

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**LESSON:** Instead of calling Jerusalem by her name, God calls her by what *she* has chosen to be – a harlot. That is so profound to me, and sad. It's like God is taking one who was absolutely precious and relegating her to the trash bin of history; but first, Jerusalem must be judged.

Deuteronomy 22:22 describes the manner of judgment of an adulterous wife, which is stoning of *both*, the woman and man. And, in this section of scripture, God says he will judge Jerusalem in this manner; however, He describes using Jerusalem's lovers as the instruments – the stones – of her destruction.

How does this judgment translate to that of a nation that has behaved as a harlot?

God will bring all of those with whom the nation fornicated upon that nation to judge it. The vulnerabilities of the nation will be exposed to the world because the image it had built of itself, and presented to the world, will be stripped away and destroyed. All the people that the nation chased for pleasure will turn on it, and, in fact, will lead to its calamity. All the things with which the nation was blessed will cease to be a blessing; and the wealth and position it chased for its own vanity will be stripped away in the presence of the nations (...in the sight of many women...). It will not be pretty.

VV44-47

What is it to "... use proverbs...?"

What is God acknowledging in mentioning "proverbs"?

What is God saying about the use of proverbs, generally?

What is the meaning behind "...As is the mother, so is her daughter"?

Is this a true statement?

What is verse 45 saying about Jerusalem's mother?

Why is it significant that God mentions these clans again?

What do we know about the Hittites and Amorites?

What are the names of Jerusalem's "sisters"?

What do we know about Samaria? 1 Kings 11-12

What do we know about Sodom? Gen 13-14

Did Jerusalem follow the examples set by her sisters?

What set Jerusalem apart from her sisters?

**LESSON:** God knows that people learn in different ways – if proverbs are your *thing*, then understand this proverb which will be used against Jerusalem. "As is the mother, so is her daughter.

A proverb is a brief, simple, and popular saying, or a phrase that states a common truth of a situation or concept, based on practical experience or common sense. God uses every tool in His toolbox to get the message across to folks.

In this section of scripture, God uses this proverb to explain the concept that parents set the pattern of behavior for their children – if you set a bad pattern then your children will follow a bad pattern of behavior; and such is the case for a good pattern of behavior also.

What do we know about Samaria, the elder sister of Jerusalem? We know that it was founded by Jeroboam, Solomon's son, and that it was comprised of the 10 tribes of Israel north of Jerusalem – they were brothers, sisters specifically, in this case. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained in the south, with Jerusalem as the capital. The king of Judah at this time was Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

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For the Jew, there was only one place of worship and service to the true God, and this was in the temple in Jerusalem. Practicing Jews traveled to Jerusalem regularly (every 2 years, I believe) to worship at the temple and do service there. Jeroboam king of Israel, felt threatened by this – fearful of losing his people’s support and loyalty. Jeroboam constructed two golden calves, saying it was too hard to have to travel all the way to Jerusalem to worship, so behold, here are your gods that brought you out of Egypt – stay here and worship where it’s more convenient. It is noteworthy that these exact words were spoken by the people Moses had brought out of Egypt just days before (Ex 32:4). What lesson can be learned from *that*?

In this moment, Jeroboam thereby set Samaria on a course of idolatry.

VV48-52

What does God say was Sodom’s sin?

Was Jerusalem also prideful, according to Ezekiel 16:24?

Did Jerusalem have plenty, according to Ezekiel 16:27?

Did Jerusalem also have a problem with idleness, according to Ezekiel 16:28?

Did Jerusalem also commit abominations before God, according to Ezekiel 8?

In what way was Jerusalem worse than her sisters?

Did Jerusalem sit in judgment of her sisters?

Did God want Jerusalem to now *feel* her shame?

LESSON: What do we know about Sodom? We are all familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the homosexuality, and Lot and his daughters (the parents of the nations of Moabites and Ammonites). But God provides an even deeper understanding of the nature of Sodom’s problem – she was *prideful*, *greedy*, and *idle* – doing nothing with all her wealth to strengthen the poor and needy – and her sin led her to behave haughtily and commit abominations before God.

And to this point in our reading of Ezekiel, we know that Jerusalem did the same; however, God says that Jerusalem is worse than both her sisters. Why would this be so?

What made Jerusalem worse than her sisters? Consider the example of Jeroboam: the temple of God *resided* in Jerusalem – God sat right there in the middle of the city – Jerusalem *knew* better. And, because Jerusalem had sunk to the level of her sisters’ behavior, Samaria and Sodom used Jerusalem’s sin to justify their own bad behavior instead of being repentant! Today, we call this “what-about-ism”. Instead of being apologetic for offending God, in our pride, we cast about for justifications for our own bad behavior.

I’ve always taught this section of scripture as an object lesson in the nature of sin. The “iniquity” of Sodom was pride, greed, idleness – the *disease*. The manner in which that disease was manifested is in the sinful behavior, the things Sodom *did* – the *symptom*. Treating the symptom does not cure the disease; and if you want to eliminate the symptoms, cure the disease. You cannot make a person less prideful or greedy by getting them to drink less; to steal less; to lie less; commit fewer murders; to be less lascivious.

God is showing Jerusalem His judgment *is* “the treatment” for her disease of *pride*, *greed*, and *idleness*. This will be the same for that final Gentile world power.

VV53-59

What do we learn God plans to do with Jerusalem and her sisters?

Who else is God planning to save?

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What will Jerusalem be surprised to discover about her sisters?

In what way is Jerusalem a comfort to her sisters?

What is meant by God not mentioning Sodom to Jerusalem, when she was caught up in her own sin?

What exactly wasn't mentioned?

Who else despised Jerusalem?

Why did God want Jerusalem to experience being *despised*?

**LESSON:** It was a bit surprising to discover that Jerusalem was related to Sodom. Samaria, we know the history and understand the relationship, but Sodom, I had not considered before this point in scripture. Jerusalem sat in judgment of Sodom and her terrible "sin", when in fact, Jerusalem behaved just as badly and, in fact, worse.

This makes me mindful of the dangers of self-righteousness – in believing that I am so much better than my brother or sister because I don't engage in homosexuality; I don't have abortions; I don't steal; I don't lie like those others do. But, I *do* have a lot of pride in the fact that I don't do those things, because then, I'm *better*, I'm *closer*, I have more *favor* with God – look how *wealthy* I am – than my brothers and sisters. And, since I have more *favor* with God, that makes me *better* than you... It all makes perfect sense, right?

Once I start to believe that I am better than you, then I start to take you for granted. Any good thing you receive and I want, I take; and, if you dare complain, I'll shut you up, because I'm stronger, wealthier, and *better* than you.

Those looking in and seeing the doings of the sisters, come to despise that of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem, initially, doesn't even know who they are. But when she learns, she cannot understand their hatred of her. She misses the fact that others are even *looking* at her, being *influenced* by her behavior – she's just dismayed that they don't admire her excellent qualities as much as she does.

The story seems so clear when you view it from the perspective of family, it is easier to imagine hatred felt by outsiders of the *favored* one, but it is important to not forget or ignore that this favored one had the opportunity to *positively* influence those around – family, friends, even foes – by her behavior.

VV60-63

Does God "divorce" Jerusalem?

Does God give to Jerusalem something more?

How will the "everlasting covenant" be different than the first covenant?

Why does it not say "I will establish an everlasting covenant *with* thee"?

What will occur when God establishes His everlasting covenant?

What about Jerusalem's sisters? What will happen to them?

What will this look like when viewed as nations?

What is meant by "...but not by thy covenant"?

What will Jerusalem know by the end of this process?

What will keep Jerusalem from opening her mouth?

What will *finally* pacify God in this matter?

**LESSON:** The wonder of this section of scripture is that God is not divorcing Himself from Jerusalem despite all she had done. He would remember His promises, even though Jerusalem had long forgotten hers. What's even more amazing is that God is going to give Jerusalem an *everlasting* covenant – notice

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this is not a covenant that He's going to make *with* her – that horse had long left the barn! With whom is the everlasting covenant made? David's son, Jesus Christ (2 Sam 7:16) – the one who fulfilled the Law of Moses perfectly. Hallelujah!

What does this section of scripture look like when viewed as nations?

God refers to Sodom as the younger sister and Samaria the elder. The story of Sodom takes place early in Genesis, prior to Jerusalem even being a nation. But then I remembered when Abraham rescued Lot, his nephew along with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, et al., when he resided in Sodom; the king of Salem, who was also the priest of the most High God, came out to greet and bless Abraham, who gave this priest a tithe of all his gain. "Jerusalem" did exist at that time.

Geographically speaking, Sodom, Jerusalem, and Samaria make up Israel. God is letting Israel know that He will allow that nation to remain in its land forever. And God doesn't want to hear a *peep* out her once His anger is assuaged. According to the Law of Moses, He had vowed to always hear:

"Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry..." (Lev 22:22-23)

As for the final Gentile world power, according Revelation 17:11, it's future is perdition.

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