

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Harlot of Babylon (Revelation 17.1-18)



1. Review of Revelation 16

- a. Trumpets and bowls (cf. Revelation 8-9, 16)
- b. Bowls 1-3: Judgment on the earth, sea, rivers, and springs (16.2-4)
 - i. source of idolatry and maritime economy
- c. Doxology (16.5-7)
 - i. The angel of the waters (cf. Rom 8.19-22)
 - ii. "I heard the altar saying" (divine response to cry of the saints; cf. Rev 6.9-11)
- d. Bowls 4-5: judgment on idolatry (16.8-11)
 - i. Scorching heat (condemnation and vindication; cf. Rev 7.13-17)
 - ii. "they did not repent and give him glory" (hardened hearts; cf. Rev 9.20-21)

response to judgment / discipline

- iii. Outer darkness (Matt 8.11; 22.13; 25.30; John 1.5; 3.19; 8.12; 12.46; cf. Acts 26.18; Rom 13.12; Eph 5.8-11; 6.12; Col 1.13; 1 Thess 5.4-5; 1 Pet 2.9)
- e. Bowl 6: gathering for judgment (16.12-16)
 - i. Exodus reversed (cf. Is 11.15; 44.27; Jer 50.38; 51.36) - *re: Euphrates*
 - ii. Croaking frogs (cf. Matt 7.12; 24.11, 24; Mark 13.22; Luke 6.22; Acts 13.6; 2 Cor 11.13-15; 2 Pet 2.1; 1 John 4.1) - *false prophecy - in land outside the church*
 - iii. the last battle - *(Armageddon) - Rev 19*
 - iv. "Behold, I am coming like a thief!" - stay awake and stay clothed (cf. Rev 3.2-3; 3.18; Ezek 16.36-39; Rev 19.7-9)
- f. Bowl 7: "It is Done!" (16.17-21)
 - i. "It is done!" (cf. Rev 21.1-8; John 19.30)
 - ii. Lightning, rumblings, peals of thunders, earthquake, and hail (Ex 19.16-18; Rev 4.5; 8.5; 11.19; cf. Hag 2.6; Zech 14.4; Heb 12.26-27)
 - iii. The fall of Babylon (cf. 17.1-19.10)

Revelation 17

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her."⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.¹¹ As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.¹³ These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.¹⁴ They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."¹⁵ And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages."¹⁶ And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,¹⁷ for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.¹⁸ And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth."

1. Introduction to the Vision (Rev 17.1-2)

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

- a. Revelation 17.1-19.10 is an expansion of the 6th and 7th bowls (Rev 16.12-21)

- b. A tale of two cities (the harlot and the bride)

Revelation 17:1-3 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 21:9-11 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

- c. Harlot cities

Isaiah 1:21-23 [Jerusalem] How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.²² Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water.²³ Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. (cf. Ezek 16.15ff) *(oppression) - economic*

Nahum 3:1-4 [Nineveh] Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder -- no end to the prey!² The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot!³ Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end -- they stumble over the bodies!⁴ And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms.

Isaiah 23:15-18 [Tyre] In that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute:¹⁶ "Take a harp; go about the city, O forgotten prostitute! Make sweet melody; sing many songs, that you may be remembered."¹⁷ At the end of seventy years, the LORD will visit Tyre, and she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.¹⁸ Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the LORD. It will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell before the LORD.

2. The Vision of the Great Harlot (16.3-6)

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother

of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

- a. The wilderness (cf. Rev 12; Ex 15.22-16.36; Num 11.1-35; 1 Kgs 19.4-10)

festing - wandering - exile.

- b. "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls" (17.4a)

luxury & - counterfeit
Isaiah 1:16-18 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil,¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

- c. "holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality" (17.4b)

- idolatry
cf. golden bowls - incense/prayer - unclean spirits - (brags)
Jeremiah 51:7-9 Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad.⁸ Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed.⁹ We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies.

- d. Mystical name: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations" (17.5)

Same - symbolic name for any earthly city/kingdom contra God.
Revelation 12:17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

- e. "drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"

3. The Explanation of the Vision of the Great Harlot (16.7-18)

- a. Introduction to the Explanation (16.7)

But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her."

- b. Explanation of the Beast (16.8-14)

NB: relationship (demonic/spiritual power)
⁸ **The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.**

- i. counterfeit divinity; messianic masquerading

⁹ **This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.** ¹¹ **As for the**

beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.

- ii. Nero *redivivus* (in Domitian)
- iii. symbolic significance (7, mountains [= kingdoms: Is 2.2; Jer 51.26; Dan 2.35])
- iv. the trans-temporal activity of the beast (in the midst of which, we live)
- v. "eighth" = more messianic masquerading (resurrection on the 8th day)

¹² *And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.* ¹³ *These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.* ¹⁴ *They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."*

essentially
alliance w beast
- persecution of
the saints
Leithart's
book - US
support of
Lamb's that
persecute X hrs).

- vi. 10 kings = "kings of the earth" = complete number of future beastly kingdoms, whose reign, from an eschatological perspective, is short-lived ("one hour")
- vii. ironic reversal of conquest

Daniel 7:21-22 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Revelation 11:7-8 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, ⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

Revelation 13:7-8 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

~~But~~ **Revelation 17:14** They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

c. Explanation of the Woman (16.15-18)

¹⁵ *And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.* ¹⁶ *And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,* ¹⁷ *for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.* ¹⁸ *And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth."*

