

REVELATION 17.1-19.10

Act Six: Babylon the Great Prostitute

Revelation 17.1-19.10 expands upon the judgments of the sixth and seventh bowls. These two and a half chapters focus on the fall of "Babylon." We first encounter Babylon in 14.8 and 16.19. Rev 14.8 describes Babylon as fallen because she "made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." In 16.19 God "remembers" "Babylon and makes "her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath." Rev 17 focuses primarily on the beast from whom Babylon receives her authority and power. Rev 18.1-19.10 then focuses on Babylon's demise.

(17.1) 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."

*One of the seven angels who poured out one of the seven bowls shows and explains to John "the judgment of the great prostitute"
 as we will see, the great prostitute is Babylon, representing all the earthly powers arrayed
 against the Lord and the saints
John sees her sitting upon "many waters," which are explained in 17.15 to be "peoples,
multitudes, nations, and languages"
 they are the "earth-dwellers" over whom she reigns
 they have "committed sexual immorality" with the great prostitute
 Ezekiel 16.15-34 links sexual immorality with idol worship
 they have become drunk drinking from her cup
 Hosea 4.10-12 - "whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the
 understanding . . . they have left their God to play the whore."
 they have served and worshiped her
now John sees and hears explained the judgment God pours out upon her*

(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.

John is carried away

*in the spirit - (Beale): the "formula" of a prophetic commission (for example: Ezek 2.2)
into the wilderness*

for God's people the wilderness is a place of protection (Rev 12.13-16)

but in Scripture it is also the habitat of demons, which is the case here in Rev 17

John sees a woman sitting in the wilderness on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns

the beast was first introduced in 13.1ff

*the beast represents the political-economic power of the Dragon who is described using the
language in 12.3*

the dragon is Satan (12.9)

the beast does Satan's bidding, to whom she is intimately tied

the seven heads and ten horns represent the expansive power

of the dragon

of the beast

of the woman

The woman is attractively dressed

like a prostitute

*but note also, the bride of Christ will also be attractively dressed (19.7-8, 21.2), but her
wedding dress will represent her righteous deeds*

*there's nothing wrong with being attractively dressed - it all depends on how one chooses
to make one's self attractive and the motivation for doing so*

*The prostitute holds in her hand a golden cup full of abominations (again, an OT "code word" for
idolatry)*

*On her head is written her name: "Babylon, the great mother of prostitutes and of earth's
abomination"*

Babylon

*in the OT Babylon razes Jerusalem, destroys the Temple, and carries the people of
Judah into exile*

*but in Jeremiah 51.13 she is told - "You [Babylon] who dwell by many waters, rich
in treasures, your end has come: the thread of your life is cut."*

*she is "great" - her greatness is her overwhelming ability to lead earth-dwellers into
abominations (Jezebel: both in the OT and Rev 2.20)*

her name, John tells us, is "a name of mystery"

her name requires interpretation (not 17.7)

her name reveals a truth anticipated but not fully explained previously in Scripture

*her name's mystery is tied to (Beale) "the unexpected or ironic manner in which . . .
events will unravel."*

*She is drunk from drinking from the golden cup she holds in v 4, which is filled with the blood
the blood of saints
the blood of martyrs who have died for the sake 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.

*Upon seeing her, John "marvels"
does this suggest that John was momentarily attracted by her?
as we will see, in v 8, the earth-dwellers "marvel at her"
or, does it simply suggest, as I believe, that John is awed by her?
John is wondering:*

*"Who is this great enemy of God and His people?"
"How can God's people possibly resist her, overcome her?"*

*The angel asks John, "Why do you marvel?"
is this a rebuke?*

*perhaps; but I think the angel is saying to John, "Fear not, I'll explain to you the mystery of
who this woman is and the ironic manner of her being overthrown."*

*She is "carried" by the beast
her power and authority come from the beast
whose power and authority comes from the dragon - from Satan*

(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.

*As we've seen previously, the beast is described in a way that reflects his attempt to parody Jesus
But what a shocking difference*

Jesus is described in this manner: is, was and is to come

the beast is first described with these words: was, is not, and is "to come"

then the beast is described in this way: was, is not, and is "about to rise"

the was and is not will be explained shortly in v 10

but as for "is to come," "is about to rise"

*remember in 11.7 the beast rises from the bottomless pit to make war on
and appear to conquer the church*

as we will see in 20.1-3, the dragon is released from a bottomless pit

*now here in 17.8, the beast rises from the bottomless pit to "go to
destruction"*

*But, in sharp contrast to the beast, . . . Christ rose again to live forever, and to assure His
people that they will also rise again and live forever with Him*

This rising of the beast is clearly different from the beast's present influence

2 Thess 2.7-8

"the mystery of lawlessness" is already at work

but, "the lawless one" has yet to be revealed

1 John 4.3

the spirit of the anti-Christ is coming

but is also already here

likewise . . .

the beast is here (though, as we shall see in Rev 20, his impact is limited)

though many follow and worship him

there are also many throughout the world whom he cannot deceive

but the beast will come and make one last desperate effort to destroy the Church

*When the beast rises (at the end of this present age), the earth dwellers, whose names are not
written in the book of life, will marvel*

does their marveling differ from John's marveling?

same word, so there is an argument to be made for John finding her attractive

but clearly there are different ways to marvel

marvel at an individual's beauty

marvel at an individual's ugliness and malignant power

(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.

To understand the mystery of the beast requires wisdom

wisdom is a spiritual gift from God

it refers to more than simply the mental ability to figure things out

The seven heads of the beast on which the woman is seated are

seven mountains

seven kings

The seven mountains seemingly call to mind Rome – a city built on seven hills

for John and his audience Rome represents the present manifestation of the beast's reign

remember that most Christians died during the first four centuries because of their refusal to worship Caesar or one of Rome's many gods

but note that John doesn't speak of the beast being seven "hills" (though it is possible to translate the Greek word as both "hill" and "mountain")

"mountains" in Revelation (8.8, especially 14.1) represent strength, as they do throughout the OT (Isa 2.2; Jer 51.25; Dan 2.35, 45; Zech 4.7)

"seven mountains" may well cause John's readers to think of Rome – but only in the sense that Rome represents the present manifestation of the beast's power

These seven mountains are also seven kings

five have fallen, one is, and the other is yet to come

in the OT "mountains" are often used to describe various "kingdoms" (kings)

many have attempted to line up these seven kings

with the succession of Caesars

with the succession of world powers (kings suggesting kingdoms)

but attempts to identify the seven hills as a succession of Caesars is confusing, and

attempts to identify the seven hills with seven successive kingdoms is not always helpful

The number seven speaks figuratively of the quality of fullness or completeness

see 1.4, 20; 4.5; 5.6; 12.3; 13.1-2

the use of the number seven represents power (12.3, 13.1-2 – seven heads)

these seven mountains and seven kings represent the "oppressive power of world governments through the ages" (Beale)

remember the seven heads of the beast correspond to the oppressive

powers spoken of in Dan 7 – the four beasts of Dan 7 have seven heads

just as Daniel's four beasts span history from Daniel's day til the coming of Christ, so the seven heads, the seven mountains, the seven kings span the centuries from Christ's coming until His return

remember the beast rises out of the sea, and the sea represents those who oppose the Lord and His people throughout the centuries

furthermore, remember that the beast's authority is a parody of Christ's authority which is not limited to some particular moment in time, and therefore would suggest that the beast's authority also spans the ages

"Five have fallen" (v 10, the beast was, and is not),

"one is" (the present manifestation of the beast),

"and the other is yet to come" (v 8, is about to rise)

Who are the five? I don't know

five Caesars? perhaps, but I don't know where to begin my count or who to count

five previous world empires? perhaps Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome – but I don't know

if the five represent specific individuals or kingdoms, I am not confident about who or what they were

I find it more satisfying to see the reference to five have fallen, of one being in power, of one to come, to be an unspecified metaphor that represents the span of history

*just as we found the number 666 does not apply to a specific individual, so I have strong doubts that the wisdom we are to apply to the information given is for the purpose of figuring out precisely the who or what to which John refers in the span of history,
 five manifestations of the beast's power have fallen
 one is presently in place
 and one is yet to come
 and when he comes, he will last but a little while*

*This approach is reinforced by John telling us in v 11 that the beast is an eighth ruler who belongs to the seven but will be destroyed
 if the eighth is also one of the seven, that calls into question the attempts to provide a literal historical identification of the seven
 the seven belong to the eight, who I assume to be the manifestations of the beast
 and the eighth belongs to the seven
 the seven serve the beast throughout history as manifestations of his power*

(Johnson): "The solution to the puzzle may be simplest, if understanding the message of the seven or eight kings [and mountains] is not dependent on historiographic [or geographic] expertise. Seven symbolizes completeness, so it shows that the beast's reign apparently holds sway over the whole history of fallen humanity."

(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."

*Apparently near the end of the age ten horns (power) which are ten kings will arise
 they will receive power from the beast
 but only for one hour (the briefest period of time known in John's day)
 They are of one mind with the beast
 they serve and worship him
 they make war on the Lamb (and thus, His saints)*

But the Lamb conquers them, for He is

Lord of lords

King of kings

And with Him will be

all those whom He has called and chosen

all who have been faithful to Him - exercising an obedient faith in Him

note the ironic twist of Dan 7.21

here the horn (the anti-Christ?) overcomes the saints

*but in Rev 17.14, the Lamb conquers the horns - the manifestations of the
beast's power exercised through earthly kings*

(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."

Now we come to an incredibly ironic moment in time

The prostitute holds power over the water - over people, multitudes, nations, and languages

*(Johnson): "She controls them in her arrogant confidence, through the heart-stealing
seduction of her promises of prosperity and through the brute force of the beast's military
might."*

But suddenly, she is hated by the powers that be and the beast

they will leave her desolate and naked

they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire

Ezekiel 16.37-41 - God's judgment of Israel for her harlotry

Why?

because God will put into their hearts to carry out his purpose

God is often seen in Scripture working through His and His people's enemies:

Ex 10.1; 14.4; 2 Chr 36.22; Acts 2.23; 4:27-28

God will cause the powers that be to be of one mind with the beast

*they will hand over the royal power to the beast - and will do so until the will of God is
fulfilled*

*They will attack the woman
the great city
that has (had?) dominion over the kings of the earth
remember the downfall of Jezebel in 2 King 9.30-37
remember the words of Jesus in Mark 3.26, "If Satan has risen up against himself
and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end."*

(Johnson): "[But] the beast and its allies, raging in hostility toward the Lamb and His bride, will be the weapons that God uses to bring down the harlot, who was once the beast's royal consort."

In Rev 18 we will see the consequences of this "civil war."

- (18.1) After this I saw another angel
 coming down from heaven,
 having great authority,
 and the earth was made bright with his glory.
- (2) And he called out with a mighty voice,
 "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
 She has become
 a dwelling place for demons,
 a haunt for every unclean spirit,
 a haunt for every unclean bird,
 a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.
- (3) For all nations have drunk the wine
 of the passion of her sexual immorality,
 and the kings of the earth
 have committed immorality with her,
 and the merchants of the earth
 have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

*"After this" indicates what John saw next
 it does not indicate that what John saw next follows chronologically
 note that what the angel proclaims in v 2, "Babylon is fallen," has already been
 announced in 14.8*

*The angel
 comes down from heaven
 with great authority
 filling the earth with his glory
 is this Jesus?
 or is this an angel bearing Jesus' authority and reflecting His glory?
 speaks with a mighty voice
 "Babylon the great has fallen, fallen!"
 she is fallen because she is populated by all manner of uncleanness (Isa 13.21-22; 34.11-15; Rev 16.13-14 - the unclean frogs proceeding from the mouth of the dragon)
 note Isa 21.1, which describes Babylon as "the wilderness of the sea"
 clearly metaphorical
 for she is located neither in a literal wilderness or sea
 but she is in truth a wilderness of uncleanness, and the ruler of the sea,
 remembering that the sea speaks of the all those opposed to the Lord
 and remember, John was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to view Babylon
 Babylon has fallen because of her wicked seduction of nations, kings and merchants
 they have drunk her wine of sexual immorality
 they have committed immorality with her
 they have grown rich off her (Ezekiel's lament for Tyre in Ezekiel 27.12-28)*

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- (4) Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,
 "Come out of her,
 my people,
 lest you take part in her sins,
 lest you share in her plagues;
 (5) for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
 and God has remembered her iniquities.

*The angel calls upon “my people” to come out of her so as not to partake of her sins
Likewise Isaiah calls upon the people to flee Babylon*

*Gen 12.1; Isa 52.11; Jer 51.6, 9, 45
Matthew 24.15-18; 2 Cor 6.17*

Babylon’s sins

*are heaped as high as heaven (they are known to the Lord)
and God “remembers” her iniquities
but the Lord promises His people in Jer 31.34 - “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will
remember their sin no more.”*

(6) Pay her back
as she herself has paid back others,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her
in the cup she mixed.

(7) As she
glorified herself and
lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of
torment and
mourning,
since in her heart she says,
'I sit as a queen,
I am no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.'

*The angel calls upon the Lord (or His avenging angels) to pay back Babylon double for the way
she has paid back others*

*Psalm 137.8 , “blessed shall be he who repays to you with what you have done to us”
Psalm 137.8 calls blessed the one who repays Babylon for what she has done to the saints
- for Babylon has mixed in her cup the blood of the saints (Rev 17.6; 19.2)
but now she is to drink a double portion from that cup*

*She once glorified herself (Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4.30 speaks of the glory of his majesty)
She once lived in luxury obtained by evil means
She boasted*

*I am a queen (hear her boast in Isa 47.7-8; remember the boast of the church at Laodicea,
Rev 3.17)*

I am not a widow

I shall never know what it means to mourn

*But now she will receive a “like measure” of torment and mourning
is she to receive a “like measure” or “a double portion”*

*the word “double” in Greek may be understood to suggest a “duplicate” - receiving
“double” may mean receiving a duplicate horror of the horror she has inflicted on
others - as Babylon has done, so shall it be done to her*

- (8) For this reason
 her plagues will come in a single day,
 death and
 mourning and
 famine,
 and she will be burned up with fire;
 for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her."

*In light of Babylon's wickedness she will suffer God's judgment
 which will come in a single day (quickly!)
 note that historically OT Babylon fell in a single day
 Isaiah 47.9 - "in a moment, in one day"
 Daniel 5.30, "that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed"
 The plagues that will befall her will be death, mourning and famine (all of which we have seen
 repeatedly in Revelation)
 She will be burned up by God's judicial fire
 for the Lord God is mighty
 Lord - our covenant King
 God - the creator and ruler over all creation and creatures
 for the Lord God has judged her, and His judgment is final*

- (9) And the kings of the earth, who
 committed sexual immorality and
 lived in luxury with her, will
 weep and
 wail over her
 when they see the smoke of her burning.
- (10) They will stand far off,
 in fear of her torment, and say,
 "Alas! Alas!
 You great city,
 you mighty city,
 Babylon!
 For in a single hour your judgment has come."

*Now begins a list of laments
 here in vs 9-10, it is the kings of the earth
 but, as we shall see, their lament is followed by the laments of . . .
 merchants of the earth (vs 11-17a)
 seaman (17b-19)
 The kings of the earth have been seduced by Babylon
 they have grown rich because of their intimate relations with her
 but now they weep and wail as they watch her burn
 (Beale) "They are afraid because Babylon's loss of economic prowess means their
 own imminent loss."
 they stand far off, fearful of what they see happening to Babylon
 Alas! Alas!
 the great city, the mighty city, in one hour had suffered God's judgment
 of course, in truth, only God is truly great and all mighty*

- (11) And the merchants of the earth
 weep and
 mourn for her,
 since no one buys their cargo anymore, (12) cargo of
 gold, silver, jewels, pearls,
 fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth,
 all kinds of scented wood,
 all kinds of articles of ivory,
 all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble,
 (13) cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense,
 wine, oil, fine flour, wheat,
 cattle and sheep,
 horses and chariots, and
 slaves, that is, human souls.
- (14) "The fruit for which your soul longed
 has gone from you,
 and all your delicacies and your splendors
 are lost to you, never to be found again!"

Now the merchants begin to lament (and will continue to lament through v 17a)

They weep and mourn because their source of economic prosperity is "lost . . . never to be found again" - note how self centered is their lament

John lists for us their lost trade goods to emphasize the "voracious materialistic consumerism" that has dominated (as is still does) the world

a similar list can be found in Ezekiel 27 in reference to the prosperous business conducted by nations and cities with the seaport of Tyre (there's nothing new under the sun)

Now note: (Beale) "All the trade produces in the list are good in and of themselves, but the telltale mark of their sinful use is the reference to slaves at the end of the list."

- (15) The merchants of these wares,
 who gained wealth from her,
 will stand far off,
 in fear of her torment,
 weeping and
 mourning aloud,
- (16) "Alas, alas, for the great city that was
 clothed
 in fine linen,
 in purple and scarlet,
 adorned
 with gold,
 with jewels, and
 with pearls!
- (17) For in a single hour
 all this wealth has been laid waste."

Like the kings in vs 9-10, the merchants stand far off as they weep and mourn over the fall of Babylon - "Alas, alas"

*They remember how the great city was once adorned
 again, (Beale) "the city is personified as a woman and her wealth is figuratively pictured
 as composing her clothing."
 again, similar to what was said about Tyre in Ezekiel 27.7, 28.13
 Interestingly, the list is similar . . .
 to the clothing of the High Priest (Ex 28.5, 8)
 to how the Lord is pictured clothing Israel in Ezekiel 16.13) - but then OT Israel turns
 away from the Lord and plays the harlot (Ezek 16.15-17)
 to how Christ's bride, the New Jerusalem, is adorned (Rev 21.1, 10-21)
 This depiction of Babylon underscores her attempts to seduce not only economically but also
 religiously - as we saw with the beast, so now we see with Babylon a parody of Christ and
 His Church
 Now, the merchants weep and mourn for in a single hour they witness the loss of Babylon's
 wealth*

*And all
 shipmasters and
 seafaring men,
 sailors and all
 whose trade is on the sea,
 stood far off (18) and
 cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning:
 "What city was like the great city?"
 (19) And they threw dust on their heads
 as they wept and mourned,
 crying out,
 "Alas, alas,
 for the great city
 where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!
 For in a single hour she has been laid waste.*

*Now the seaman stand far off and cry ("Alas, alas") as they watch Babylon burn, realizing it
 means for them economic loss
 Ezekiel 27.28-33 paints a similar picture as the seaman witness Tyre's fall
 They mourn: "What city was like the great city?"
 contrast their mourning with Exodus 15.11, where Moses asks: "Who is like you, O Lord,
 among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds,
 doing wonders?"
 the cry of the seaman "is no longer a proud declaration of human self-confidence but a cry
 of shocked perplexity, for the megalopolis has been turned in a wasteland." (Johnson)
 Throwing dust on their heads is a cultural sign of mourning*

(20) Rejoice over her,
 O heaven, and
 you saints and apostles and prophets,
 for God has given judgment for you against her!"

In sharp contrast to the laments of the kings, merchants, and seaman . . .

*Heaven
 saints
 apostles
 prophets*

are called upon to rejoice

for God's judgment has risen against Babylon

Literally: "God has inflicted on her the judgments you received from her"

Remember Revelation 6.9-11 where the saints in heaven asked God to avenge their blood?

now He has

and they are to rejoice

*for, as we will see in Rev 19.2, "His judgments are true and just . . . [for He} has
 avenged on [Babylon] the blood of His servants"*

God is love and just

*again remember: He is not defined by our concepts of love and justice; love and justice are
 defined by His Being*

His decreed penalty for sin is death

and for us He has paid that penalty

*and one day, we will rejoice to see His justice poured out (as difficult as that is for
 me to imagine when I think about those who will suffer the consequences of
 their sin)*

(21) Then a mighty angel took up a stone
 like a great millstone and
 threw it into the sea, saying,
 "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down
 with violence,
 and will be found no more;

(22) and the sound of
 harpists and musicians, of
 flute players and trumpeters,
 will be heard in you no more,

and a craftsman of any craft
 will be found in you no more,
 and the sound of the mill
 will be heard in you no more,

(23) and the light of a lamp
 will shine in you no more,
 and the voice of bridegroom and bride
 will be heard in you no more,

*for your merchants were the great ones of the earth,
 and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.*

*24 And in her was found
 the blood of*

*prophets and of
 saints, and of*

all who have been slain on earth."

Now John sees a mighty angel throw a great millstone into the sea
As He does so the angel proclaims so will Babylon be thrown down with vengeance and be found
no more

look at Jer 51.60-64

The prophet Jeremiah was told to write on a scroll all the calamities that would
come upon OT Babylon, to tie his writings to a stone, and to toss them into the
Euphrates

clearly a millstone cannot rise from the depths of the sea
so likewise Babylon will never rise again

And with her demise, the sights and sounds of everyday life will cease

no music

no craftsmen

no sound of the millstone

no lamp will give light

no more weddings

Why?

because the nations were deceived by Babylon's sorcery

because the nations were deceived into serving and worshiping Babylon because she
caused them to prosper

because Babylon has provoked the nations to persecute and kill God's people

(19.1) After this I heard

what seemed to be the loud voice

of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

Salvation and

glory and

power belong to our God,

(2) for his judgments are

true and

just;

for he has

judged the great prostitute

who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has

avenged on her the blood of his servants."

In response to the command in 18.20 to "rejoice over her [Babylon]," John hears a "great
multitude in heaven" offering up its praise to "our God"

remember the "great multitude" of Rev 7.9-17)

representing nations, tribes, peoples, and languages

clothed in white robes

waving palm branches (symbolizing victory!)

The "great multitude" cry

"Hallelujah!" - praise the Lord

Psalm 113-118

note especially Ps 104.35 - "Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the
wicked be no more! Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord

[Hallelujah]!"

this is their cry because salvation, glory, and power belong to God (in sharp contrast to the
supposed salvation, glory, and power belonging to Babylon)

*this is their cry because God's judgments are true and just
not because God does what we would judge to be true and just
but because God's Being defines what is true and just*

God has judged the great prostitute (Rev 17.1-5)

Babylon has enticed the peoples of the earth to acts of immorality (idolatry)

they have become intimate with her

they have worshiped her

they have joined with her in persecuting the saints (11.18 - "the destroyers of the earth")

now God answers the prayers of His martyred servants in 6.10

"How long?"

how ever long it may have been, God now "avenged the blood of His servants!"

remember 16.17-21 - Babylon has drained "the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath"

Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30 (both quoting Deut 32.36) - "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" - Rev 18.6, "Pay her back"

(3) Once more they cried out,

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

Again they cry out "Hallelujah!"

For the smoke from Babylon being consumed with fire goes up forever and ever.

Isa 34.8-10 - concerning God's judgment of Edom, Israel's enemy

just as the millstone (Rev 18.21) was thrown into the sea never again to rise, so now

Babylon is forever consumed with fire

ironically one of the names for the Roman Empire was Roma aeterna - eternal Rome

(Johnson): "Ultimately God promises a complete removal of the 'first heaven and earth'

(20.11; 21 1), and with them God's curse against human sin, with all its adverse

effect. . . . for which 'no place is found' when the new heavens and earth appear."

(4) And the

twenty-four elders and the

four living creatures

fell down and

worshiped God who

was seated on the throne, saying,

"Amen. Hallelujah!"

(5) And from the throne came a voice saying,

"Praise our God, all

you his servants,

you who fear him,

small and great."

Now joining in the worship and praise of the Lord are the . . .

twenty-four elders (angelic representatives of the church)

four living creatures (angelic representative of creation)

They fall down and worship God seated on His throne with shouts of "Amen. Hallelujah!"

"Amen" - so be it!

*Then all God's servants . . .
 both small and great
 all who fear (remember: familial fear, not servile fear)
 are called upon to continue to praise God (as they have been doing in vs 1-2)*

(6) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude,
 like the roar of many waters and
 like the sound of mighty peals of thunder,
 crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

(7) Let us

rejoice and

exult and

give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

(8) it was granted her to clothe herself

with fine linen, bright and pure"--

for the fine linen

is the righteous deeds of the saints.

*Then, once more, John hears "what seems to be the voice of a great multitude" praising the Lord
 the voice speaking is difficult to identify, for . . .*

the voice is like the roar of many waters

the voice is like the sound of mighty peals of thunder

which sounds like the great multitude of the redeemed in Rev 7.9-17

which sounds like the voice of the Son of Man in Rev 1.15

which sounds like the scene in Exodus 19.16 as the Lord comes down on Mt

Sinai

They praise the Lord ("Hallelujah!") because

the Lord

our God

the Almighty

*now reigns - remember Rev 11.17, "You have taken your great power and begun
 to reign")*

*They rejoice, exult, and give God glory because it's time for THE wedding - the wedding of the
 Lamb and His bride*

Now note

just as the great prostitute was introduced in Rev 14.8 and then explained in 17.1

so likewise, the bride is now introduced but will not be explained fully until 21.2, 9ff

So who is this bride to whom the Lamb is married?

she is one who has made herself ready

she is one to whom is given the right to clothe herself . . .

with fine linen

bright and clean

which represents the righteous deeds of the saints

she is the composite representative of the saints - she is the church

her clothing represents her righteous deeds performed in faithful obedience to the Lord

*but note, she is granted the privilege of being so dressed
granted by whom?
granted by the Lord*

So . . .

*she clothes herself
but note, she clothes herself in the garments granted to her
and her clothing represents her righteous deeds*

*What we have here is a classic picture of the doctrines of JUSTIFICATION and SANCTIFICATION
she is granted (given) the wedding garments she needs
but she clothes herself in those garments*

*Being granted the wedding garments she needs corresponds to JUSTIFICATION (“an ACT of God’s
free grace”)*

*the wedding garments are a free gift granted to her (given to her) from the Lord
Isa 61.10, “I will greatly rejoice [Rev 19.7] in the Lord; my soul shall exult [Rev 19.7] in my
God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with
the robe of righteousness.”*

*note that in Isa 61.10-11 it is both the bridegroom and the bride are
clothed and covered*

it is the Bridegroom’s righteousness that clothes the bride

Ezekiel 16.6-14 - the Lord cleanses and clothes His chosen bride

Clothing herself corresponds to SANCTIFICATION (“a WORK of God’s free grace”)

she chooses to receive the garments

she chooses to be dressed in these garments that represent righteous deeds

she chooses to do what is righteous

*Philippians 2.13, “it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure”
Philippians 2.12, “Therefore . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*

*Ephesians 2.8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.”
Ephesians 2.10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which
God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

*Colossians 3.12, “Put on then, AS GOD’S CHOSEN ONES, HOLY AND BELOVED, compassionate
hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”*

*(Wilcock): “From one point of view she has made the dress herself; she has worked out her own
salvation. From another, ‘it was given unto her’, for God has been at work in her.”*

(9) And the angel said to me,

"Write this:

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Here we find the fourth of Revelation’s seven benedictions

as believers we are together corporately pictured as the bride

as individual believers we are blessed to be invited to the wedding

*remember the corporate and individual identities suggested by the symbolism of the
woman and her children in Revelation 12*

Scripture pictures this moment in time as a great feast

Isaiah 25.6-9

Luke 14.15-24 (note the invitation to "the small and great" [Rev 19.5])

Matthew 22.1-14 (note what happens to the man present without a wedding garment)

And he said to me,

"These are the true words of God."

(10) Then I fell down at his feet to worship him,

but he said to me,

"You must not do that!

I am a fellow servant with

you and

your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God."

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The angel speaking with John assures him that what he has seen and heard are the words of God"

John is so awed by what he has seen and heard he falls at the angels feet to worship him for which the angel rebukes him

the angel equates himself with John as a fellow servant

furthermore, the angel equates himself with all John's brothers who faithfully hold true to

Jesus - people, by God's grace, like you and me

the angel instructs John to worship God who alone is worthy of worship

remember, for example, Thomas falling at Jesus' feet to worship Him

Jesus does not rebuke Thomas

instead He accepts Thomas' worship, because Jesus is God the Son

The last phrase of v 10 speaks either

of Jesus testifying by the Spirit through His prophets

or of the Spirit speaking through the prophets' words of testimony about Jesus

Ephesians 2.19-22, "You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the

household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ

Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined

together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built

together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

in either case, the focus of prophecy, like the focus of all Scripture, is Jesus