



Revelation 17-18

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,
because the time is near. 1:3

The **JUDGMENT** of the beast and his kingdom, **BABYLON THE GREAT**, was the subject of the three final scenes in the vision of the seven angels with the seven bowls. **That topic is now expanded and explained in the new vision which follows** . . . The angel narrates the details of the scene and explains its symbolism (cf. Revelation 5:5; 7:13). The wording of the angel's invitation to John -- "**Come, I will show you**" is identical to that used by the angel in Revelation 21:9 to introduce "**the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" **This is only the first in a series of parallels which clearly indicate the intended contrast between the true church (the Bride) and the anti-church (the prostitute/harlot).** The latter is a deliberate parody and perversion of the former -- its opposite in every way.

The PROSTITUTE is the counterpart and the opponent of the BRIDE!

JUDGMENT

ON BEAST AND HIS KINGDOM

The Second Angel

14:8

The Third Angel

4:9-11

The first 5 Bowls

16:1-11

Armageddon

And the 7th Bowl

16:12-21

Read Revelation 17:1-4

17:1 The Prostitute \approx *pornia*

In Revelation 14:8, Babylon was accused of leading all the nations to imbibe "**the maddening wine of her adulteries.**" The Greek noun used in that instance was "**pornia**" which is a general term describing sexual sin of every sort and description. The word "**prostitute**", one who offers sexual favors in return for payment, is drawn from the same root word.

† **The Old Testament often used adultery and prostitution as a image for the spiritual unfaithfulness of idolatry.** The prophet Isaiah lamented the unfaithfulness and idolatry of Jerusalem with these words: "**See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She was once full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her -- but now murderers!**" (cp. Isaiah 1:20; note also Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1)

† The depiction of the pseudo-church as a prostitute serves to emphasize both her **attractiveness and her corruption.** The contrast between the image of the alluring prostitute and the pure modesty of the virgin bride which will represent the true church (cf. Rev 19:7) could not be more striking. Beneath the deceptive veneer of her beauty lurks the ugly reality of falsehood and death.

The anti-church looks genuine, but it is not. White, p.497-498

† **This harlot is further identified as "the great prostitute" to stress her connection to "Babylon the Great."** John adds one more detail to strengthen the Babylon link still more: "**the great prostitute who sits on many waters.**" The phrase is drawn from Jeremiah 51:13 where the prophet describes the people of Babylon as "**the people of Babylon, you who live by many waters and are rich in treasures.**" The angel will later explain that the "**many waters**" in this scene are a symbol of the nations and peoples of the earth (cf. Revelation 17:15).

The GREAT PROSTITUTE is yet another symbolic representation of the beast from the land in Revelation 13. Revelation 13 presents the Anti-Christ, and all the anti-christs of this world from two perspectives.

- † *The first beast*, the beast from the sea, represented the Anti-Christ and the anti-Christian powers brazenly and boastfully flaunting their strength to coerce the obedience and obeisance of mankind. **This is the political/cultural beast.**
- † *The second beast*, the beast from the land, revealed the more subtle, devious side of the Anti-Christ and his works. **This is the religious beast.** The creature with the outward appearance of a lamb but the voice of the dragon showed the devil at work **not in overt persecution** but in **internal subversion within the church itself**, always carefully concealed beneath a mask of piety. The beast from the land was not what he appeared to be. Behind the false facade of the lamb lurked the deadly jaws of the dragon. Deception is the essence of his being. **The masks behind which he conceals his menace are constantly changing in the imagery of Revelation.** First he is the **lamb/Beast** (Revelation 13;11- 18); next he appears as **The False Prophet** (Revelation 16:13); and now he is presented as **The Harlot of Babylon.** *The shifting disguises signal the deceptiveness of our foe.*

Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.499-500

17:2 Adulteries

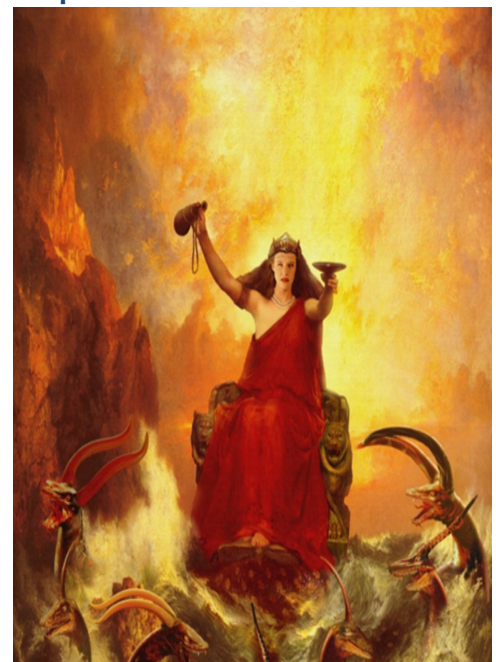
Unlike the true church which must endure rejection and persecution, the false church achieves widespread consistent success. **Until God's judgment at the End, the pseudo-church, which appears to be beautiful and attractive (the harlot), will be accepted and honored by the world, for she flatters and encourages the lifestyles of the ungodly.** Revelation, Brighton, p. 437

- † The prostitute is not only corrupt but corrupting. She spread her wickedness throughout the world, an intoxicating and **immoral influence upon all of the powers and authorities of this world** – *the Kings of the earth as well as the inhabitants of the earth.* The mindlessness of evil, which abandons common sense, reason, and decency in the desperate pursuit of selfish, sensual satisfaction is presented as the drunkenness of “**maddening wine.**” Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.501-502

17:3 The Desert setting

“In Scripture a ‘desert’ can be used positively as a place of comfort and revelation (Exodus 19; 1 Kings 19:4-6; Isaiah 40:3; Ezekiel 34:25; Mark 1:35,45; 6:31-35) or negatively as a place of testing and devastation (the forty years in the wilderness; Psalm 95:7-11; Isaiah 1:7; 35:25; Matthew 4:1). In Revelation, the desert is positive in 12:6,14, where the woman finds a place of refuge from the dragon in the desert, and negatively here, where it is become the location of Babylon the Great, which will become ‘a home for demons’ (18:2; cp. Isaiah 13:21). Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*,

p.502



17:3 The Woman Sitting On A *Scarlet Beast*

The harlot who had been seated upon the many waters which represented the nations of men is now depicted astride “*a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.*” This is the first beast of Revelation 13, the beast from the sea (the political/cultural beast). The description here provided is **virtually identical** to that of the sea beast (cf. Revelation 13:1-3).

† John provides one significant additional detail. The color of the beast is “**SCARLET**,” the color of the dragon (cf. Revelation 12:3). **Scarlet** is the color of Rome, royalty and royal power. The Greek word used here also describes the royal robe which the soldiers mockingly placed upon Jesus during the torture which accompanied His trial (cf. Matthew 27:28). **Scarlet** further denotes luxury and extravagant wealth. The harlot is arrayed in “*purple and scarlet*” to indicate her great wealth and power. In Revelation 18:12, the purchase of “*purple and scarlet cloth*” is cited to illustrate the rich prosperity of fallen Babylon. In the more general symbolism of Scripture **scarlet** is the color of sin and corruption (cf. Isaiah 1:18). Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.502-503

† [Regarding Revelation 17:3] In the visions of the beasts from the sea and the land (in Revelation 13) the beast from the land was presented as the servant of the beast from the sea. Now the roles are reversed. The beast from the land, in the guise of the harlot, sits astride the beast from the sea, suggesting mastery and control.

This interchange of roles further reinforces the view that the two beasts are not separate and distinct creatures at all, but rather different dimensions of the same reality. **The beasts represent the Antichrist and all the anti-Christian forces of this world. The beast from the sea presents the cultural and political aspect of the anti-Christian attack while the beast from the land stresses the Anti-Christ's assault within religion and the church.** Our foes are relentless in their opposition to the true Christ and His Church. But while their opposition is constant their tactics are ever changing to meet the needs of the moment. The goal is always the same, but the means used to achieve that goal --- *political, military, social, economic, theological or ecclesiastical* --- are adjusted as necessary to accomplish that which the *dragon* desires: the destruction and damnation of mankind.

Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.503-504

17:3 Blasphemous Names

The scarlet beast is “*covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.*” In his earlier appearance, the beast's blasphemous names were limited to his seven heads (cf. Revelation 13:1); they now cover his entire body. **The expansion serves to intensify the message that blasphemy is the characteristic activity of the beast.** The beast's seven heads signify his perfect craftiness and cleverness while his ten horns represent governmental and political power. Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.504-505

17:4 Extravagance: *purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones, pearls*

The harlot is clearly a figure who celebrates her wealth and power. She flaunts her riches before the world in an extravagant and profligate lifestyle which only serves to arouse the admiration and envy of the powerful. From the colors of her clothing to the richness of her elaborate jewelry everything in the appearance of this figure sends the message of self-indulgence and success. White, [Revelation](#), p.504-505

- † “**Purple**” cloth was associated with royalty in the ancient world and remains so today. Purple material was extremely expensive, its dye marketed exclusively by the city of Tyre produced from two species of shellfish which lived along the Phoenician coast.
- † “**Scarlet**” cloth was also synonymous with luxury and wealth, its deep red color derived from the juice of the rare Kermas berry
- † The Greek text emphasizes the excessiveness of the harlot’s jewelry by the double repetition of the word **gold** in the original text - literally - “*and was made gold with gold*”.
- † Add to all this the extravagance of an abundance of precious stones and the picture of a prostitute plying her trade is complete.
- † **In stark contrast, the pure bride of the Lamb is simply dressed in “fine linen, bright and clean.” (Revelation 19:8)**

- † **The Golden goblet** is an image from Jeremiah 51:7 - “*Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand: she made the whole world drunk. The nations drank her wine, therefore they have now gone mad.*” Like everything else about the harlot, the golden goblet is a lie. Its outward appearance seems to enhance her royal regalia, the image of her wealth and power. But within the golden cup there is only corruption, contamination and filth.



- ✓ The golden goblet contains a hellish brew of idolatry and blasphemy. The language of the text is most emphatic. “*Abominable things*” are those things which are detestable, absolutely intolerable to the holiness and righteousness of God. The term is characteristically used in the Old Testament in reference to the worship of demons and idols (i.e. Deuteronomy 18:9; 29:17; 32:16; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:2; 23:24; Ezekiel 8:6,9,13,16,17; 11:18; 14:6; 16:2; 20:7,8). White, Revelation, p.505-507
- ✓ A “*golden cup*” invites and entices to drink, for who would offer anything but the most precious drink in a golden cup? Indeed, in such a cup the antichristian seduction is served, and the earth’s dwellers drink to drunkenness. There is the gold of exquisite poetry and prose in the whore’s literature; the chased gold of her seductive science; the exquisite cup of her philosophy; the brilliance of her music and entertainment. Extend the list yourself. Yet within “*abominations,*” “*the unclean things of the great whore’s whoring.*” Revelation, Lenski, p. 495

Read Revelation 17:5-8

17:5 Mystery God is about to reveal the name to us

The inscription begins with the word “**MYSTERY**.” This term refers to that which is secret or concealed, a truth which can only be known by revelation from God. Its use here indicates the need for divine assistance in deciphering the symbolism of the Harlot — Babylon the Great. It suggests

once again the **deceptiveness** which is to be expected in all that pertains to the Anti-Christ and his realm ... Everything about this figure is false and misleading. The truth can only be known only by looking beneath or behind that which appears to be. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.507

17:5 Babylon the Great

The harlot's name is "**BABYLON THE GREAT**." There are six (the number of the Anti-Christ) references to Babylon in Revelation (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21). The symbolic significance of the ancient city of Babylon, which destroyed Jerusalem, is the epitome of the worldly powers which oppose and persecute the people of God. **Babylon the Great is not one city; it is every city.**

Understanding "Babylon the Great":

see chart "The Two Invisible Kingdoms"

17:5 The Mother Of Prostitutes And Of The Abominations Of The Earth

The language reflects the disgusting contents of the harlot's golden goblet. To be "THE MOTHER OF" indicates the dual significance of both origin and superlativeness. As a mother is the source of her children, so Babylon the Great is **the source of all the wickedness and corruption of this world** (cf. Hosea 2:2-13; Jeremiah 50:12).

- † At the same time, to be "*The Mother Of Prostitutes And Of The Abominations Of The Earth*" is to be **the most depraved and corrupt of all**, the absolute epitome of these perversions. The Roman historian Tacitus described his own city in this sense when he reported that Rome had become a place "where all the horrible and shameful things in the world congregate and find a home." (Tacitus, *The Annals*, xv, 44). Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.507-508

17:6 Persecuted Christians

John depicts the woman, Babylon the Great, in a **drunken stupor**. But it is not wine that has brought about her drunkenness. The harlot is also a murderess --- "**drunk with the blood of the saints**." Evil cannot tolerate the good. **Those who will not yield and conform must be destroyed.**

Throughout history Babylon the Great will persecute, oppress, and murder the saints of God.

- † The theme of becoming **drunk on blood** as a metaphor for slaughter and violent destruction is drawn from the Old Testament. Among the ancients, being drunk with blood spoke of a lust for violence, vastness of slaughter, and their maddening effect on one who was inclined to initiate savagery." (cp. Ezekiel 39:17-19 Isaiah 49:26 Jeremiah 46:10) Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.509-510
- † **The Blood of the Holy Martyrs** The harlot cannot tolerate God's people because they are "saints" - literally "**holy ones**". They have refused to be corrupted by the harlot's iniquity and are pure --- cleansed in the blood of Christ. In the face of the lies and the falsehood of Babylon the Great they have offered the good confession as **faithful witnesses (martyrs)** to the truth of Jesus Christ. That is why the harlot lusts for their death and destruction. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.509-511

17:6-7 John is astonished

Literally “*I marveled a great marvel.*” The word also carries the connotation of perplexity or confusion. The English phrase - “*I was overcome with complete astonishment and confusion*” might convey the same intensity. John’s astonishment becomes the opportunity for the angel to expound the mystery of the harlot astride the scarlet beast. That which was hidden in the symbolism of the vision will now be set forth as the angel explains the scene.

17:7-8 The *Beast*

The majority of the angel’s exposition pertains not to the harlot herself but to the beast which she rides. The two are inextricably bound to one another, contrasting dimensions of the same reality — **the Antichrist and all the anti-Christian forces of this world – both secular and religious.** The angel’s description of the beast ridicules his pretensions of divinity.

† The threefold formula for the eternity of God appears frequently in Revelation - “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” says the Lord God, “*who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*” The angel applies the same formula to the beast to mock his arrogant blasphemy and reveal him as nothing more than a pathetic parody of the only true God: *once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction.*

† **The decisive moment in the age old battle between God and Satan, Christ and Anti-Christ, was the sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection of Jesus.** At that time the ancient prophecy that the Descendant of the Woman would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) was fulfilled and the devil’s power was broken. **It is around that critical moment that the tenses of these three verbs (past - present - future) turn.** The rebellion of Satan and the onslaught of his minions has vexed mankind since the beginning (“*once was*”). The devil’s power to condemn and destroy was shattered at Calvary (“*now is not*”). Nonetheless, he rose up from the depths of Hell once more and his foredoomed attempts to frustrate God’s plan of salvation continue with the appearance of great power and success (“*and will come up out of the Abyss*”). However, unlike the Christ whom he seeks to replace, Satan and his Anti-Christian forces do not rise up in triumph to live and reign throughout eternity. Instead their destiny is certain destruction and damnation (“*and go to his destruction*”).

White, *Revelation*, p.512-514

17:8 Unbelievers Astonished (Deceived)

The world loves a winner and that is exactly what the beast appears to be. His seeming ability to overcome God and His Christ, and to recover from the fatal wound inflicted upon him will astonish and impress all those who lack the spiritual discernment to see things as they truly are. **Power, wealth, size, and success will always be on the side of the devil until the Lord comes again in judgment. Until then, the true church will always be a small remnant, scorned and persecuted by the world while the false church of the Antichrist glories in its magnitude and majesty.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.514-515



Read Revelation 17:9-14

The “**wisdom**” called for here is the **spiritual discernment** to see through the deceptions of the harlot and beast and recognize true reality. The Lord has revealed the truth to us throughout Revelation.

The Seven Heads, Hills, Kings

In his great epic the “Aeneid,” the Roman poet Virgil describes Rome as a “city of seven hills.” (Virgil, 6, 782-83). Thus Rome came to be known throughout antiquity as the city built upon seven hills. A Roman coin, minted in A.D. 71, during the reign of Vespasian, actually depicts the goddess Roma seated upon seven hills alongside the legendary she-wolf who was said to have raised Romulus and Remus, the founders of the city (see sidebar). **The angel’s identification of the seven heads of the beast as “seven hills upon which the woman sits” is thus clearly an allusion to the city of Rome.** The harlot astride the beast is linked in a unique sense to the imperial city of Rome.



- † The use of hills or mountains as a figurative symbol for kings or kingdoms is common in the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:2, Jeremiah 51:25; cf. also Ezekiel 35:3; Daniel 2:35,45; Zechariah 4:7.) Accordingly, John’s linkage of the heads with both hills and kings would be a natural one for his original audience. **The fact that there are “seven” heads/hills/kings signals that these are not literal historical kings or kingdoms but a symbolic picture of all of the oppressive governments of this world that lend their coercive power to the cause of the Antichrist and false religion.** The number seven occurs some 45 times in Revelation outside of this section. In every instance its use is clearly figurative. **Seven is the most powerful numerological symbol in the book. It is always the perfect number, signifying totality and completion.** White, *Revelation*, p.516-517
- † The number seven is symbolic and represents all earthly powers and rulers who claim spiritual authority by which they justify and sanction their despotic dominion over their subjects, in particular as it is used in opposition to the church of Christ. *Revelation*, Brighton, p.449
- † John proceeds to reintroduce the ironic threefold past/present/future formula which he had used in 17:8 to mock the divine pretensions of the beast. **The endless variety of attempts to identify the “five,” the “one” and the “other” with specific kings or kingdoms is futile and basically misunderstands the symbolic nature of the language.** The past/present/future formula serves to emphasize the **CONTINUOUS RISE AND FALL** of the rulers and kingdoms of this earth. This will remain the case throughout time and history (past/present/future) as the devil uses and casts aside his instruments of destruction. Emperors and tyrants come and go; great empires arise and conquer only to fall and disappear into the dust of history; *but the nefarious work Satan and his Antichrist continue subverting the powers of this world to work their hellish will.* Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.517-518

- † John hastens to assure his readers that even this most dangerous adversary of the faith will not prevail. God remains in absolute control. Even the time of the seventh is limited. He will go to his destruction.
- † Any remaining doubt about **the symbolic nature of these numbers and images** should be dispelled by the addition of the beast itself to the other seven rulers. The casual manner in which John shifts and adjusts the images precludes the possibility of a coherent literal interpretation. Each of the beast's seven heads is a king and now the entire beast becomes yet another king. The mocking threefold formula is cited once again - "**who once was and now is not...and is going to his destruction**" -- as the beast is declared to be an eighth king. This is not yet another monarch in a sequence of rulers. The beast is the summary and epitome of the other seven -- "**He belongs to the seven**" literally - "**He is of the seven.**" Earthly rulers, new tyrannies, false Christ's and anti-Christ's come and go, but behind and through them all the anti-trinity does its work. White, Revelation, p.519

17:12 Ten Horns

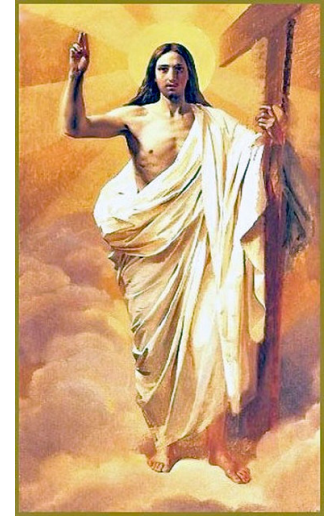
Once again the image is drawn from Daniel 7:4-8 by way of Revelation 13. Ten is the symbol for the power and authority of government and the law. The horn itself represents power . . . a configuration of ten horns represents the coercive power of governmental authority. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.520

- † The angel explains: "**The ten horns you saw are ten kings.**" This image of governmental power is directed toward the future for these are kings "**who have not yet received a kingdom.**" As throughout this vision, the language is figurative. **The reference is not literally or exclusively to monarchy as a particular form of government but to all governmental authority no matter what form it may take.** The emphasis on the ten horns constituting a distinct threat in the future seems to suggest that *the anti-Christian use of perverted governmental power* will intensify as the end times draw to their tumultuous conclusion and judgment approaches. The rise in the modern era of totalitarian states of both left (Communist) and right (Fascist) which have wreaked unprecedented havoc . . . is consistent with this emphasis. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.520-521
- † The phrase "**but who for ONE HOUR will receive authority along with the beast**" emphasizes the sovereign control of God and the brevity of the sway of these evil governments and the satanic force which manipulates them. "**For one hour**" is a Biblical idiom for a very short period of time.
- † While the image of the ten horns stresses the multiplicity of the governmental powers that serve the cause of the Antichrist, they remain completely united in the allegiance and ultimate goal --- "**They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.**" The devil does not enlist allies --- he makes slaves. To be sure, most of the enslaved do not recognize their status, but they remain slaves nonetheless. **The sole purpose of the anti-trinity is the destruction of the Church and the damnation of humanity.** To that end the powers "**make war against the Lamb.**" The military metaphor is drawn from Daniel 7:21 where the anti-Christian "little horn" "**was waging war against the saints and defeating them.**" **John significantly alters the language in that it is now the Lamb, not the Antichrist who overcomes.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.521

17:14 Jesus, The Lamb, the King of Kings

In striking contrast the Lamb, the image of meekness and vulnerability is hailed as the "**Lord of lords and King of kings.**" They are also used in Revelation 19:11-16 to identify the victorious Son of Man who will come again in power and glory as the Judge of humanity (cf. also Deuteronomy 10:17; Daniel 2:47; 4:17; 1 Timothy 6:15).

- † This conflict has raged across the ages and will not cease until the judgment trumpet sounds. Only “the Lamb” is capable of successfully waging war against the beast and decisively defeating it. But by grace the Lamb’s victory is not His alone. **He graciously chooses to share that victory with all who are His own -- “and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers.”** The language strongly emphasizes the monergistic nature of salvation. God’s people are the elect, those who He has called and chosen.



See Handout: “The Victorious Lamb”

Read Revelation 17:15-17

The angel’s initial invitation promised “*I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters.*” (Rev 17:1). **The angel brings John back to that theme and offers a preliminary account of the judgement of the whore which serves as an introduction to the more lengthy account which will follow in chapter 18.**

17:5 Peoples, Multitudes, Nations And Languages

The use of the earth number, four, signifies the universal dominion of the harlot over unregenerate mankind, in a manner typical of the Revelation (cf. Revelation 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6).

17:16 Betrayal

Despite the harlot’s compelling allure and her semblance of overwhelming power the downfall of her anti-Christian spiritual reign is certain and will, in fact, come about at the hands of those who were her most devoted allies. The passionate attraction and admiration which had characterized the attitude of the political, economic, and military powers represented by the beast, the seven heads, and the ten horns will be replaced by bitter hatred and loathing. Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.522-524

- † The specific catalyst which brings about this change is not cited. ***Given the end times, final judgment, character of these events, it may be that as the Lord returns in glory the powers and dominions of this world will realize that they have been deceived and misled by the harlot.*** They will be roused from their drunkenness to sober reality. But at that moment it will be too late. Judgment has come. Nonetheless, they will strike out in bitter rage.
- † The brutal imagery of the harlot’s downfall is drawn from **Ezekiel 23**... The similarity between the two texts is remarkable. ***In both instances God uses His enemies to punish His fallen church, whose unfaithfulness and idolatry is depicted as adultery and prostitution.*** Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.525-526
- † With a hatred as satanically irrational as their former devotion had been, they turn upon the harlot who once charmed them and made them drunk, to ravage and destroy her. ... Dissension in the ranks of the damned is a recurrent pattern throughout history, expressive of the inherent self-destructiveness of evil. Jealousy, envy, and the lust for power or pleasure have caused the slaves of the Lord of Darkness to turn upon one another in vicious rage again and again. White, [Revelation](#), p.526-528

17:17 God is in Control

The sovereign Lord remains in absolute control. Even His enemies do His will and serve His purpose. *“They think they are fulfilling their own plans, but in reality they are blindly fulfilling the divine counsel.”* Whatever power the anti-trinity possesses comes from God and can only be used in a manner consistent with His plan. The Word of God will stand unshakably firm and sure through all generations. His promises unfailingly hold true. That which He has prophesied will most surely come to pass.

Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.528

TRANSITION

At the beginning of the previous chapter the angel had promised a vision of *“the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters.”* (Revelation 17:1). The remainder of the chapter had dealt with a description of the woman, the seven headed beast upon which she was seated, and a brief account of her downfall in the context of the betrayal of the harlot by the beast. The scene now shifts back to the subject of the punishment of the prostitute in order to present a detailed account of God’s judgment upon harlot Babylon. The closing verse of chapter 17 (*The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth*), which re-emphasized the identification of the woman and the great city provided the transition to the vision of Babylon’s downfall which now follows. **What now follows in chapter 18 is, to a large extent, an expansion and explanation of events already presented in chapter 17.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.530-531

Read Revelation 18:1-3

18:1 A Magnificent Angel: *The Son of God!*

The only other comparable angel in the visions of Revelation is the “mighty angel” of Revelation 10. The angel in that instance is depicted with the accouterments of deity --- *“He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.”* (Rev 10:1). We concluded that the angel in Revelation 10 was, like *“the Angel of the Lord”* in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Himself. A similar conclusion seems to be warranted here. **This is no ordinary angel but the Son of God.** The Lord comes to pronounce God’s judgment upon the sinful city, Babylon the Great. He brings with Him the splendor of the presence of God. Throughout the book of Revelation, whenever “glory” is ascribed to a heavenly figure it refers to God or to Christ (cf. Rev 1:6; 4:9,11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 19:1; 21:11). White, *Revelation*, p.529-531

† The precedent for referring to Jesus as an angel is well established in the Old Testament where the pre-incarnate Christ is consistently referred to as the **Angel of the Lord**. The Angel of the Lord is also closely associated with the

Babylon

Means That God Will Triumph!

This is the real message of the usage of **BABYLON** in Scripture! The title “Babylon” is the assurance and guarantee that the Lord will prevail! Revelation takes the language of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel to show that there are no doubts about the outcome. *What is happening now has happened before, and the outcome will be the same, even to the end of time.*

Note Isaiah 21, Jeremiah 51, Daniel 5.



cloud of God's glory which traveled before Israel in the wilderness and stood between Israel and Egypt at the Red Sea (cf. Exodus 14:19-20). The language here in Revelation 18 is very similar to that of Ezekiel's messianic vision of God's "*shekinah*" glory returning to the temple in Ezekiel 43:1-5 . . . John's evident reliance upon this prophetic text strongly reinforces the view that this angel is in fact the Angel of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Himself. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.532-533

18:2 "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!"

The structure of Revelation 18 closely parallels the taunting dirges sung by the Old Testament prophets over the enemies of Israel (i.e. Isaiah 14:3-23; 47:1-15; Jeremiah 50:1-51:64; Ezekiel 27:1-36; 30:1-19; 32:1-16). **These anticipatory funeral songs announced the death and destruction of kings and nations that were still very much alive and at the height of their power. But they had already been judged by God. Therefore their downfall was as certain as if it had already occurred.** White, *Revelation*, p.535

- † The opening words of the Lord's announcement repeat Revelation 14:8. Both texts are drawn from Isaiah 21:8-9 - *"And the lookout shouted...Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground.'"*
- † The literal city of Babylon fell to Persia in 539 B.C., never to rise again as a significant world power. Here **Babylon the Great represents all the forces of evil in this world.** She is the harlot (cf. Revelation 17:18), the realm of the Anti-christ and all of the anti-Christian forces that have opposed and persecuted the people of God throughout history ... **Her ultimate downfall and destruction will be the culmination of human history,** the final vindication of God and His faithful people. The devastation of harlot Babylon will be total. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.536
- † True Babylon will be **exposed.** The facade of her luxury and power will be stripped away to reveal **the hideous reality of demonic presence** which has always lurked there as Babylon's guiding and empowering force. John's language recalls that of **Isaiah 13:19-22** and **Jeremiah 50: 35-40.**
- † So destructive and fearful will be her judgement that all that is left within her, together with the jackals, hyenas, and birds of prey, are the ghost-like memories of those who once inhabited this house of wealth and sensual pleasure. Terrifying memories of the fallen, decaying corpses now haunt and eerily moan over the corpse of the fallen harlot herself. However, demons and unclean spirits could here be more than merely the memories that haunt the empty shell of Babylon. They could be the actual demons of hell itself which --- have been all along the companions of the harlot as they inspired her to carry out her anti-Christian activities. Now, at her demise, having used her for their own devilish purposes, all that is left of the once proud city are the **demons hovering over her corpse.**" Revelation, Brighton, p. 465

18:3 Adultery

Once again, using the imagery of Jeremiah and Isaiah, John reminds us of the harlot's role in seducing the nations and their rulers into **idolatry and sin. Beneath a deceiving facade of piety she has enticed the world into sin.**

- † Sanctioned by her perverted form of Christianity, they received from her license to indulge in and live by filthy lucre and sensual power and immorality." Revelation, Brighton, p. 466
- † Through **lies and deception,** the tools of Satan, unbelievers have followed her into death.

Read Revelation 18:4-8

18:4 Flee from Babylon!

The appeal for God's people to separate themselves from the realm of the Anti-Christ is couched in the language of the Old Testament prophets. *"Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it."* (Isaiah 48:20) *"Flee out of Babylon; leave the land of the Babylonians, and be like the goats that lead the flock."* (Jeremiah 50:8) *"Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the Lord's vengeance; He will pay her what she deserves...Come out of her, My people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the Lord."* (Jeremiah 51:6,45). Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.538-540

† Our Lord's appeal is not a call for physical separation from a literal city. **It is a call to shun the temptations and enticements of man made religion.** ... Since the beginning, the fundamental temptation has been to spurn the gracious love of God in favor of **human effort so that we might ourselves be like gods.** This is the essence of the anti-Christian religion embodied by Babylon the Great. Beneath the deceiving facade of Christian piety, it glories in human wisdom and wealth, luxury and power. Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.541-542

† The concept of separation from evil, unbelief and false doctrine in order to avoid contamination and punishment is a consistent theme in Scripture. . . . Jesus urged His followers *"to flee and not look back or go back to rescue anything"* when they saw the Abomination of Desolation rise over Jerusalem (Mark 13:14-16). The Lord's language clearly alluded to the deliverance of Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the "lingering fondness of Lot's wife for Sodom" which led to her transformation into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:1-29). In the same way, St. Paul quoted Isaiah 52:11 in support of his appeal to the Corinthians not to associate with the idolatry and immorality of unbelievers: *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellow ship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols... Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you."* (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) **THERE IS A DEEP SENSE OF URGENCY IN THESE TEXTS WHICH CONTRADICTS THE LACKADAISICAL ATTITUDE WHICH PREVAILS IN MUCH OF THE MODERN CHURCH TOWARD FALSE DOCTRINE AND MORAL IMPURITY.** *The easy going tolerance which allows truth and error, right and wrong, to comfortably co-exist with one another is misguided and dangerous.* Sin is never benign. It is always malignant. It corrupts and destroys. Sin is inherently contagious, reaching out to contaminate and spread. Living as God's faithful people, *"in the world but not of the world"* (John 17:11,16), temptation to sin cannot be avoided. But to deliberately place one's self in the path of temptation is spiritual folly. Luther notes: *"You cannot prevent the birds from flying in the air over your head, but you can certainly prevent them from building a nest in your hair."* (AE,42,p.73). Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.542-543



- † St. Augustine defines flight from Babylon spiritually as growth in the faith, ever greater watchfulness against the wiles of the enemy and dependence upon God's grace in Christ.
Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.543-544
- † The word "**share**" clearly suggests the contagious nature of sin and the risk that Christians will be drawn into the sinful conduct that surrounds them.
- † The persecuted church has always faced the temptation to compromise with worldliness and thus ease the tension of living in a hostile environment. **SEPARATION IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY: sometimes physical, always ideological.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.545

18:5 Sin Piled up to Heaven

The wording may be drawn from Jeremiah 51:9: "*We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.*" Note the irony of this with Genesis 11:4!

18:6 Double portion

The judgment of God is never arbitrary or capricious. God's punishment always fits the crime. So shall it be in His judgment upon Babylon. . . The language of the text is drawn from **Isaiah 47:7-9** where the prophet contemptuously dismisses Babylon's supreme self-confidence and her reliance upon the dark powers of magic and the supernatural. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.549-550

18:8 One Day

The judgement of God upon great Babylon will be sudden and complete. John's reliance upon Isaiah 47 continues - "*Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day.*" (Isaiah 47:9). The arrival of judgment will be completely unexpected and therefore all the more abrupt.

Read Revelation 18:9-20

Laments for Babylon SIMILAR TO EZEKIEL 27ff

Those who have "*committed adultery with her and shared in her luxury*," they lead the opening chorus of her dirge. The paradox is striking! These are the very same people who had viciously turned on the harlot to destroy her in a futile attempt to save themselves (Revelation 17:16-18). Now they weep and wail at her passing. **There is no rhyme or reason to the actions of those who have turned their backs on God and His Word.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.550-552

- † The scene is very similar to that of the world's re-action to God's judgment of Tyre in Ezekiel's funeral song over the monarch of that mighty Phoenician trading city. Ezekiel's dirge over Tyre is also led by three groups, **kings, merchants, and mariners.**
- † Their horror is intermingled with terror for they now recognize only too well that the same judgment which has devastated the harlot is sweeping inexorably toward them.
- † "**WOE**" has appeared before in Revelation's visions (cf. Revelation 8:13). *It is a cry of consternation and despair, uttered in the face of overwhelming catastrophe.* All of Great Babylon's

glorious strength --- emphasized in the threefold repetition “*O great city, O Babylon, city of power!*” --- was not able to deliver her from the judgment of the mighty God. *The absolute totality of her devastation, completely unexpected, descending upon her suddenly without warning is stressed by the king’s lament - “In ONE HOUR your doom has come!”*

The Merchants Of The Earth Mourn

The second chorus in the global lament over the downfall of Babylon the Great is sung by “*the merchants of the earth.*” . . . This a matter of economics not loyalty. The text continues to follow the pattern of Ezekiel 27 which lists a detailed inventory of the luxury trade which comes to an abrupt end because of the downfall of Tyre (cf. Ezekiel 27:12-24). Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.554

Fifteen of the twenty-nine items on Revelation’s cargo manifest also appear in Ezekiel 27.

† When we recall that Babylon equals the whole anti-Christian seductiveness in all the departments of human life for all the earth dwellers we shall not regard these “merchants of the earth” as literal merchants but shall see that they are **all those who pander to the anti-Christian seduction and fatten themselves upon this seduction.** The world is full of them today, many of them being great, multitudes of them being small. They set up their emporiums everywhere: thousands of them have big establishments in politics all over the world, hundreds of thousands have them in schools and education with seductive anti-Christian wares. Who will count them in books, magazines, the press! They import and export, ever doing a big selling business, finding delighted buyers everywhere, maintaining vast chain stores all over the world. Anti-Christian display wherever you turn. Babylon, “*the Mother of the Whores*” (17:5), is well served by her merchants who sell the seductive goods of her whoring. They grow rich through it, for it certainly pays...yet the whole statement is symbolical and should not be reduced to mere monetary riches but should be regarded in the light of what is considered as profit in Babylon the Great...The godless politician and the grafter of the government with his cargo of goods; the conscienceless lawyer in the court with his cargo; the sceptic editor, writer, professor with the cargoes they unload; the pulpiteer and ecclesiastic with the anti-Christian cargoes they unpack; and so forth in the whole anti-Christian world, in every corner of it, down to the peddlers and all that all salesmen of anything in the way of anti-Christian seduction and attraction, offer, and all that in any way they make by it for their own satisfaction, are here referred to.” Revelation, Lenski, pp.516,524-525

Sea Captains And Sailors

The third chorus of Babylon the Great’s funeral dirge is sung by the world’s mariners. The prominence of seafarers in the lament is the result of John’s reliance upon Ezekiel’s lament over the downfall of the city of Tyre. The island city of Tyre was the headquarters of the Phoenician’s commercial empire. Phoenician trading ships set sail from Tyre across the Mediterranean and beyond establishing colonies and extending their reach throughout the ancient world. Recognizing this reality, Ezekiel depicts the destruction of Tyre as a catastrophic shipwreck. (Ezekiel 27) In Ezekiel’s vision the sailors who reach the shore bewail the city’s downfall and cover themselves with the dust and ashes of mourning (Ezekiel 27:28-32). Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.561

† The traditional Old Testament imagery of mourning - “*They will throw dust and their heads and with weeping and mourning cry out*” - is drawn from the mariners’ lament in Ezekiel (cf. Ezekiel 27:30) For the third time, the chorus ends with the awestruck, almost disbelieving, assertion of

the suddenness and the totality of Great Babylon's destruction - "*In one hour she has been brought to ruin.*"

Kings, Merchants, and Sailors *Stand Far Off*

Like the kings, the merchants and sailors seek to distance themselves from the judgment which has come upon the city – but their fate is so closely interwoven with hers that there is no escape for them now . . . Her downfall is theirs.

18:20 Believer's Rejoice in Babylon's Fall!

The tone of lamentation and gloom abruptly shifts to exultation in verse 20. To the multitudes of those who were allied with her or profited from her work, the destruction of Harlot Babylon was an unmitigated catastrophe, signaling the coming of their own demise. **But for the faithful people of God the news of Babylon the Great's downfall is the sweetest gospel, cause for celebration and rejoicing.** Accordingly, Babylon's funeral song concludes with a call from the Lord for His people to break out in celebration. The hymns of jubilation which will follow in chapter 19 are sung in response to this summons. **The bitter enemy of the true church has fallen and God's people are encouraged to hold a joyful celebration over her dead body.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.562-564

† Those who have patiently borne the brunt of the whore's fury -- "*saints and apostles and prophets*" -- are specified in the celebration invitation. God's judgment upon Babylon is, in a sense, an expression of His love for his own. "*God has judged her for the way she treated you!*" **The holy ones rejoice in their vindication, not in the sense of personal vengeance, but as a vindication of the justice and the holiness of God.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.564

Read Revelation 18:21-24

18:21 The Large Millstone

The promise of God's judgement upon Babylon the Great and its dire consequences for her legions of followers are reaffirmed once again in **symbolic action** and **dramatic words**.

† At the conclusion of the Book of Jeremiah, we had been informed that the prophet had sent the scroll of his prophecy of Babylon's downfall and destruction to be read in the city of Babylon itself by a military officer named Seraiah. The prophet had further instructed his messenger that when he had finished reading the prophecy of doom he was to wrap the scroll around a stone and hurl it into the River Euphrates (Jeremiah 51:59-64). Jeremiah had explained the symbolic significance of throwing the judgement scroll into the river as follows: "*So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.*" (Jeremiah 51:64) John adapts and extends Jeremiah's symbolism to convey both the suddenness and



the permanence of God's judgement upon Harlot Babylon. All of the apostle's adaptations serve to intensify the message of irrevocable destruction. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.564-565

- † The stone the Angel bears is “*a boulder the size of a large millstone.*” ... The language here recalls the words of our Lord in Matthew 18:6 — “*But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*” Harlot Babylon had existed across the centuries for the sole purpose of leading men to damnation. The use of the millstone plunged into the depths of the sea is therefore a most appropriate image of her destruction. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.564-565
- † **As Jeremiah had indicated, the image of the stone sinking beneath the water represents destruction that is complete and permanent.** The stone slips below the surface of the water into oblivion; down into the depths of a watery grave. **Nehemiah** had used the same image to describe the utter destruction of Pharaoh and his mighty host in the Red Sea: “*You divided the sea before them so they passed through it on dry ground, but You hurled their pursuers into the depths like a stone into the mighty waters.*” (Nehemiah 9:11) In Ezekiel 26:19-21, the meaning of the image is in great detail as the great port city of Tyre would be submerged beneath the vast waters of the sea. John's language distinctly echoes that of **Ezekiel** - “*With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.*” Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.567
- † The Greek text stresses the suddenness of Babylon's . . . *with such violence* ... to use our modern idiom, the defenders are swept away “*before they knew what hit 'em.*” When the Sovereign Lord's judgement finally comes upon Harlot Babylon it will be suddenly and irrevocably.
- † In the wake of the Lord's judgement, the city will be desolate and empty, **a ghost town devoid of the sounds of life.** Where once the hustle and bustle of human activity abounded, now the chilling silence of death will prevail. In the utter darkness, demons will scurry through the shadows of a derelict ruin that now belongs to them alone. The language is similar to **Jeremiah 25:10.** White, p.568
- † **The mournful words of the mighty angel sound like a dirge upon human culture** — what lovely gifts of God are lost when men use them against the God who gave them!” Franzmann, p. 124
- † **Magic Spell** Harlot Babylon is condemned because of the “magic spell” by which she has misled and deceived the nations. Behind the harlot lurks the dragon who empowers her to work supernatural wonders on behalf of her falsehood. Ancient Babylon was renown for its astrology, occult wisdom, and magic ... see Isaiah 47:9-13 Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.569-570
 - Sorcery is here understood in its broadest sense as a reference to the harlot's false spirituality, wonder-working signs, and apparent miracles (cf. Revelation 13:13-14; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9) by which she deceived and led astray people to believe that they had security through their trust in her.” *Revelation*, Brighton, p. 480
- † **Martyr's Blood** Finally, Harlot Babylon must be utterly destroyed because she is guilty of the blood of saints and martyrs. **Throughout history, harlot Babylon has been characterized by the bloody persecution and slaughter of the faithful.** Her bitter opposition to the Gospel has been consistently expressed by the brutal murder of the Gospel's faithful witnesses. **Harlot Babylon is covered with the stains of martyr's blood.**

Rev 17: **BABYLON THE GREAT** is described
Rev 18: **BABYLON THE GREAT** is condemned
Rev 19: **BABYLON THE GREAT** is DESTROYED