

Revelation 17

Introduction: In chapter 16 we see the bowls of God's wrath being poured out upon the earth (16:1). The end of the age is approaching. God will no longer overlook the times of ignorance and rebellion (Acts 17:30-31). God's bowl is full of wrath that will now be poured out according to measure of the harlot's cup of sin. As the bowls are being poured out an angel approaches John and carries him away in order to show him God's judgment of "the great harlot who sits on many waters (17:1)." The angel goes on to give John a description of the great harlot, the beast which will seek to wage war against the Lamb.

- I. Description of the Woman
 - a. Great Harlot (v1)
 - i. The description of harlot occurs frequently in the OT. We see it referring to God's people corporately when they run to other gods or other nations for protection instead of trusting in His promises. They are said to have "played the whore" in Hosea 1. We see this terminology especially in the prophets. We also see it used in the Proverbs to refer to the temptation for individuals to forsake the Lord and His ways (Pr. 7:6-27; 9:13-18).
 - b. Sits on many waters (v1)
 - i. Interpretation of the "many waters" is given in v15 – "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues". Contrast this with Rev. 7:9.
 - ii. Who can stand against such power and temptation? The only protection one has against such a powerful temptress is the presence of the Holy Spirit wielding the power of the divine. That is why throughout the letter you see God's elect gathered to Himself despite marginalization, extreme temptation, suffering, and death (Rev. 7:9).
 - c. Sitting on a scarlet beast (v3)
 - i. We see here that the woman is dependent on the beast to establish her idolatrous system.
 - d. Clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality (v4).
 - i. Notice that the harlot is a counterfeit of the true wife of the Lamb.¹
 - ii. The term "abominations" carries with it great biblical history. "Abominations" expresses God's view of her idolatries, by which she makes the nations and their kings drunk (14:8; 17:2). The term has emotive impact because of its use in the construction "abomination of desolation," which first described the Syrian tyrant Antiochus IV's desecration of the Jerusalem temple in 168 B.C. (Dan. 9:27; 11:31) and then was used by Jesus when he

¹ Johnson, Dennis. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, pg. 245.

prophesied the temple's destruction by Roman armies (Matt. 24:15).²

- e. Name written on her forehead, "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." (v5)
 - i. Contrast this name with the name written of the saints.
 - ii. This woman represents fallen human culture in all the apparent glory of its achievement and the true repugnance of its arrogance. In John's day, seven-hilled Rome arose and after Rome fell, the harlot Babylon was giving illegitimate birth to daughters like herself, seductive in appearance and repulsive in reality.³
- f. Drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus (6)
 - i. Notice the repetition of this phrase (17:6; 18:24, cf. 11:8; 19:2)
 - ii. The angel reveals to John why this woman is due judgment. She not only sought out the creature rather than the creator but she killed those who would not go along with her idolatry.
- g. Great City (v18)
 - i. Interpretation of the woman as the great city is given in (v18) – "The woman you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

II. Description of the Beast

- a. The color of the beast is scarlet (v3)
- b. He is full of blasphemous names (v3)
- c. He has seven heads with ten horns(v3)
 - i. See notes on 12:3 & 13:1
 - ii. Seven heads and ten horns represent authority.
- d. He was, and is not, and is about to come...(v8)
 - i. It is a negative image, a counterfeit of the true and living God, "who is and who was and who is to come" (1:4), and especially of the Son of Man, who is "the living One," once dead but now "alive forevermore" (1:18).⁴
 - ii. At its root every pagan world empire is another incarnation of the same satanic spirit that will reach full intensity just before it shatters before the glory of the Lamb and "goes to destruction" (17:8, 11).⁵

III. Description of the One who will overcome

- a. He is described as a Lamb (v14)
 - i. A more detailed description will come in chapter 19.
- b. He is called Lord of Lords and King of Kings (v14)
- c. He has with him those who are the called and chosen and faithful (v14)

² Johnson, Dennis. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, pg. 245-6.

³ Ibid., pg. 246.

⁴ Ibid., pg. 247-8.

⁵ Ibid., pg. 251

Revelation 18

Introduction: The angel in chapter 17 shows John that the woman, the beast, and their followers are deserving of God's wrath. The one they will wage war against is referred to as the Lamb and as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. This is the one who will overcome them along with his followers. In chapter 18 another angel comes on the scene in a dramatic fashion. The beast's kingdom has been made dark by the fifth angel and now you have an angel whose coming illumines the earth with his glory. The angel announces Babylon's fall as well as how unbelievers and believers respond to this mighty act.

- I. The Fall of Babylon (18:1-8)
 - a. Reasons for her judgment (*lex talionis*)
 - i. She has caused others to join her in her idolatry instead of worshipping the one true God. (v3)
 1. Romans 1:32
 - ii. Her sins have piled up as high as heaven (v5)
 1. Tower of Babel, Gen. 11
 - iii. Glorified herself (v7)
 - iv. Lived sensuously (v7)
 - v. Pride (v7)
 - vi. "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth" (v24)
 - b. Call to believers
 - i. Gen. 19:15-22; Isa. 52:4, 11; Jer. 50:4-9; 51:6, 45; 2 Cor. 6:17
 - ii. The new covenant promise that God will "remember no more" the sins of his people assures us of both forgiveness and release from punishment (Jer. 31:34). By contrast, the assurance that God "remembers" Babylon's sins means that he holds her fully accountable, so that her punishment is inescapable.⁶
 - c. Response from the world's perspective (v9-19)
 - i. Weep and Lament the destruction of Babylon
 1. The kings of the earth (v9-10)
 2. The merchants of the earth (v11-17)
 3. The sea merchants (v17-19)
 - d. Response from heaven's perspective (v20-24)
 - i. Rejoice!
 1. Who should rejoice?
 - a. Saints
 - b. Apostles
 - c. Prophets
 2. Why should they rejoice?
 - a. "Because God has pronounced judgment for you on her (Babylon)." (v20)
 - i. Rev. 18:24

⁶ Johnson, Dennis. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, pg. 255.

- e. Millstone illustration (v21-23)
 - i. Jeremiah 51:60-64; Ezekiel 26:21; Matthew 18:6
 - ii. The strong angel's act of throwing a great millstone into the sea shows that Babylon's fall is permanent and irremediable (Rev. 18:21).⁷
 - iii. Cf. Rev. 2:20-24
 - 1. To say it another way, the Thyatiran prophetess is a concrete local expression of the worldwide, history-long threat symbolized in the harlot, the subtle pressure to cultural conformity and the seductive rewards it brings in financial and social security.⁸
- f. Description of what Babylon will be like after the judgment of God (v22-23)
 - i. Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10

⁷ Johnson, Dennis. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, pg. 258.

⁸ Ibid., pg. 260.

Revelation 19

Introduction: As we transition into chapter 19 we move from the result of the destruction of Babylon to shouts of praise to the one who is worthy of all praise, the Lord our God, the Almighty. He has overcome that which has set itself against his kingdom. Christ is the true Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Also, we see in chapter 19 the contrast between two suppers and the defeat of the beast and the false prophet.

- I. Praise to God for judging Babylon (v1-6)
 - a. Fourfold Hallelujah
 - i. First Hallelujah (v1-2)
 1. Who? Great multitude in heaven
 2. Why? Because His judgments are true and righteous
 - ii. Second Hallelujah (v3)
 1. Who? Great multitude in heaven
 2. Why? Because the smoke of Babylon's destruction rises up forever and ever
 - a. Cf. Isa. 34:10
 - b. The assertion that the smoke "rises up forever and ever" carries the same message as the millstone cast into the sea (18:21): When the day of judgment comes, judgment will be irreversible. The implication that Babylon's smoke ascends eternally ("forever and ever") is prophetic hyperbole, as later statements in Revelation make clear.⁹
 - iii. Third Hallelujah (v4)
 1. Who? 24 elders & the four living creatures
 2. Why? Because of God's judgment of Babylon
 - iv. Fourth Hallelujah (v5-8)
 1. Who? A great multitude
 2. Why? Because the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns
- II. Marriage of the Lamb (v7-10)
 - a. The Praise continues as the great multitude looks to the marriage of the Lamb and His church
 - b. The bride is clothed in fine linen which was given her
 - i. Fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints (v8)
 - c. John is told to write a message
 - d. John falls to worship the messenger and is rebuked (v10).
 - i. This shows that the messenger is not the risen Christ. Notice that this messenger uses the term "fellow servant" to refer to himself.
 - ii. This has happened a few times so far in this letter.
- III. Description of the coming Christ (v11-16)
 - a. "And I saw heaven opened (v11)"

⁹ Johnson, Dennis. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, pg. 261.

- i. “Meaning God is about to act on earth in a decisive way”¹⁰
 - ii. Cf. Rev. 4:1; 11:19; 15:5; Ezek. 1:1
- b. “white horse”
 - i. Indicates a warhorse (not a donkey)
- c. Seven Descriptions of the Warrior Messiah
 - i. “Faithful and True”
 - 1. “The final war is mandated because Christ is ‘faithful’ to his calling and ‘true’ in his justice.”¹¹
 - 2. cf. Rev. 1:5; 3:7, 14; 19:11; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 9
 - 3. Application – As followers of Christ we are to remain faithful to God in a hostile world.
 - ii. “In righteousness he judges and makes war”
 - 1. “It means that God dispenses justice on the basis of his own righteous standards, that he always does what is right.”¹²
 - 2. He is the standard of righteousness.
 - 3. cf. Rev. 16:7; 19:2
 - 4. “Yet not only does he judge in righteousness, but he also ‘makes war’ in righteousness. Since the dragon (12:7, 17; 16:13) and the beast (11:7; 13:4, 7; 16:14; 17:14; 19:19) have ‘made war’ against God and the saints, God and Christ have ‘gone to war’ (2:16; 19:11; cf. 2:26; 17:14; 19:14-16) against their enemies. If there has ever been a ‘just’ or ‘holy war,’ this is the one! The whole theme of lex talionis (law of retribution) that has been so prevalent in the book culminates in this passage.”¹³
 - iii. “His eyes are like a flame of fire”
 - 1. cf. Rev. 1:14; 2:18; Dan. 10:6
 - 2. “Refer both to the penetrating vision by which God discerns all and the ‘fiery’ judgment that will result from his all-seeing discernment.”¹⁴
 - iv. “On his head are many diadems”
 - 1. 3 people in this book are said to wear a ruler’s crown
 - a. The dragon (12:3) – “seven diadems” – limited reign
 - b. The beast (13:1) – “ten diadems” – limited reign
 - c. Christ (19:12) – “many diadems” – absolute and eternal reign
 - v. “He has a name written that no one knows but himself”
 - 1. cf. Rev. 2:17; 3:12; Isa. 62:2
 - 2. “Therefore, the ‘new name no one knows except he himself’ is a title reserved for eternity, the name that will

¹⁰ Osbourne, Grant. Revelation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 679.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 680.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., pgs. 680-81.

reveal the true nature of the Godhead in a way beyond our finite ability to grasp.”¹⁵

- vi. “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood”
 - 1. The context is a military one so perhaps it is the blood of his enemies (see Osbourne p. 682).

- vii. “The Name by which He is called is the Word of God.”

- 1. 3rd title in the list
 - a. “Faithful and True”
 - b. “New name”
 - c. “Word of God”
 - i. Cf. Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1

- d. Christ does 4 things

- i. Leads an army from heaven
 - 1. “it is likely that the ‘heavenly army’ will consist of both angels and saints”¹⁶
- ii. “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations”
 - 1. “The sword was a symbol of Roman authority over life and death.”¹⁷
- iii. “He will rule them with a rod of iron”
 - 1. “The ‘iron scepter’ is actually the shepherd’s club that kills the enemies of the sheep.”¹⁸
- iv. “He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty”
 - 1. cf. Rev. 14:19-20; 16:19; Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 19:13
 - 2. “The shedding of their blood will be just payment for their shedding the blood of the saints (6:10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2).”¹⁹

- e. 4th title given to Christ

- i. “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”
 - 1. “This is another place where the divinity of Christ is stressed – the Warrior Messiah is God himself!”²⁰

- IV. Great supper of God (v17-18) – the vision moves from to earth

- a. Rev. 19:17-18
- b. “There will be two great messianic banquets at the eschaton: the feast with the lamb for the saints and the feast on sinners for the carrion birds.”²¹
- c. Cf. Ezek. 39:17-20

- V. The defeat of the beast and the false prophet (v19-21)

- a. “This is truly ‘the day of the Lord’ prophesied throughout the OT.”²²

¹⁵ Osbourne, Grant. Revelation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 682.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 684.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 685.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 686.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 687.

- b. We see here the first of four groups that will be cast into eternal punishment.
 - i. Beast & False Prophet (19:20)
 - ii. Devil (20:10)
 - iii. Death and Hades (20:14a)
 - iv. Unbelievers (20:14b)

²² Osbourne, Grant. Revelation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 689.