

Rev 17:1-19:10, Rise and Fall of the Great Whore

Overview

The heart of John’s letter to the seven churches is a series of four visions that John receives “in the Spirit” (Figure 1, chart). These visions form a chiasm. The outer two, the letters to the churches and the vision of the Bride of Christ, show us God’s people in their presently earthly struggle (ch. 2-3) and ultimate exaltation (ch. 21-22). The center two

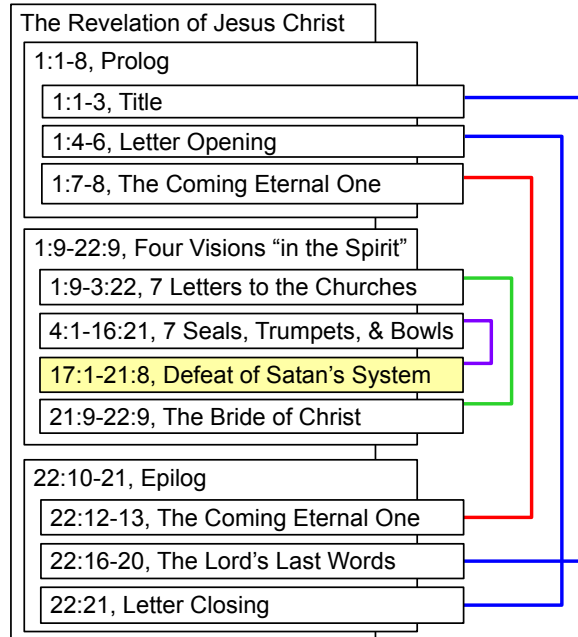


Figure 1: Structure of the Revelation

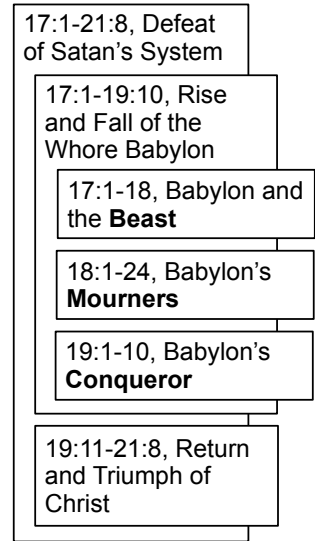


Figure 2: Structure of Revelation 17-21

deal with God’s judgments. First we have three series, each with seven world-wide judgments, the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Then in chapters 17-19 we zoom in to see the defeat of the demonic system that opposes God’s kingdom.

We have completed the second of these four spiritual visions. We will take the third in two parts (Figure 2). First we focus on the destruction of Babylon the great, which stands in a special relation to the Satanic trinity. Then we consider the return of Christ, his thousand year reign, and the final judgment on Satan and his followers.

The central character in 17:1-19:10 is called “Babylon,” sometimes identified as “that great city.” Figure 3 (chart) shows the distribution of these terms in the Revelation, and makes clear their concentration in these two chapters.¹ The “great city” appeared for the first time in the account of the two witnesses,

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of **the great city**, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

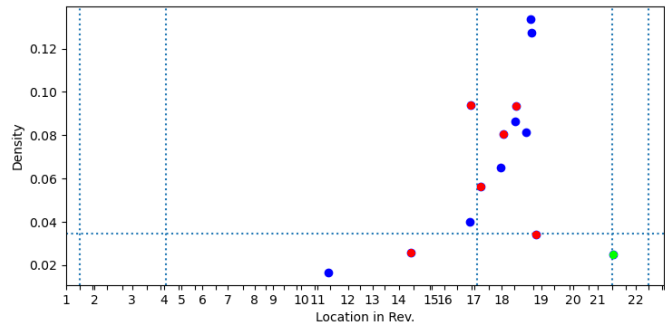


Figure 3: References to Babylon (red), or Great City (blue = Babylon; green = Jerusalem)

The symbolic name “Babylon” is first applied to her in the message of the second flying angel, announcing her doom:

1 The final reference to a “great city” is to the heavenly Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Satanic great city in Revelation 18, we are allowed to see the city that Abraham sought, “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10), which endures for ever.

Rev 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, ~~is fallen, that great city~~, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And her fall is one of the elements in the seventh plague,

Rev 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and **great Babylon** came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

The section on Babylon has three parts, distinguished by those who are interacting with her (Figure 2). First, Revelation 17 describes her relation with the beast from the sea, whom we met in 11:17 and chapter 13. Next, Revelation 18 records the mourning over her fall by those who profited from her. Finally, 19:1-10 shows saints praising the conqueror who destroys her.

Before we pursue these individual relations, we need to inquire more closely into the identity of Babylon, the great whore. She is characterized in two ways: by the name of this ancient city, and also by her description as a whore or harlot πόρνη G4204 who promotes fornication πορνεία G4202 (17:4). Let us consider each of these characterizations more closely.

First, consider the terms “whore” = “harlot” and “fornication.” Figure 4 (chart) shows the distribution of these terms throughout the Revelation. They are most concentrated in chapters 17-19, but they were also frequent in the letters to the churches in chapters 2-3. To Pergamos, the Lord wrote,

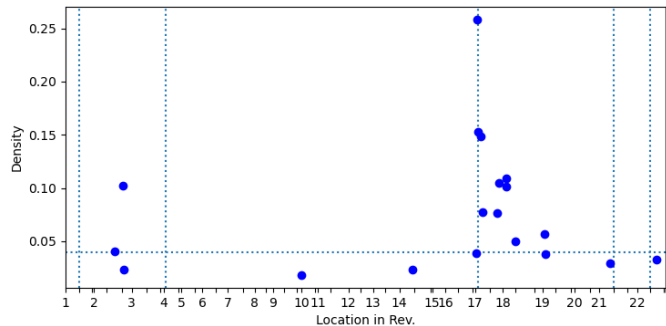


Figure 4: Fornication and Harlotry in the Revelation

Rev. 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit **fornication**.

And to Thyatira,

Rev. 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit **fornication**, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her **fornication**; and she repented not.

In both cases, the fornication is associated with meals dedicated to idols. These practices threatened the purity of the churches.

The image of a harlot occurs 21 times in the OT.² Alford (on Rev 17:1) observes,

The figure here used, of a harlot who has committed fornication with secular kings and peoples, is frequent in the prophets, and has one principal meaning and application, viz. to **God’s church and people that had forsaken Him and attached herself to others.**

2 Alford lists Isa 1:21; Jer 2:20; 3:1, 6, 8; Ezk 16:15-16, 28, 31, 35, 41; 23:5, 19, 44; Hos 2:5; 3:3; 4:15 (Mic 1:7). His three exceptions are Isa 23:15-17 and Nah 3:4, which leads him to expand his summary of the image: “So that the Scripture analogy, while it points to unfaithfulness and treachery against God’s covenant, also brings to mind extensive empire and wide-spread rule over the kingdoms of the earth.” We will shortly see that this feature emerges from the use of the name “Babylon.”

This consistent OT image, and the warnings in Revelation 2-3, suggest that harlot Babylon represents the apostate church, the end state of the pollution that was beginning to affect Pergamos and Thyatira, engaged not only in physical impurity but also, through idolatry, in spiritual fornication against the heavenly bridegroom.

The name “Babylon” lends two additional insights into the character of this apostate church, based on its use in the OT. It emphasizes centralized human authority, and makes the focus on idolatry clearer.

The name first appears (translated “Babel,” but representing the same Hebrew term as “Babylon”) in Genesis, after the flood. It is the center of Nimrod’s kingdom (chart):

Gen 10:8 And Cush begat Nimrod: **he began to be a mighty one** in the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. 10 And **the beginning of his kingdom was Babel**, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod is the first “mighty one,” or strong man, after the flood, and Babel is the first reference to a “kingdom” in the Bible. Nimrod invents the notion of a centralized government.

Perhaps because of the security and government resources it offers, Babylon becomes the hope of all the earth for unification:

Gen 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the **land of Shinar**; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, **lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth**. . . . 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called **Babel**; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

So Babylon suggests first of all efforts to achieve unity by human organization and government.

Hierarchical authority is a human creation, and not the way the Lord runs his creation. When James and John sought prestigious positions in the coming kingdom of God, our Savior warned his disciples of this instinct:

Mat 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Hierarchical institutions are the work of man. Babylon is the archetype of such an institution.

Solomon, who ruled Israel at its most powerful, recognized the artificial nature of human hierarchies, and marveled at how God orders his works without such crude frameworks:³

3 There are numerous secular examples of the superiority of distributed mechanisms over centralized ones. The weakness of centralized command economies in generating wealth compared with ecibinues allowing free competition is thoroughly documented, and modern technology, from the internet to logistics, draws on these techniques. For many examples of imitating decentralized mechanisms, see <https://www.abcresearch.org> .

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which **having no guide, overseer, or ruler**, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

Pro 30:24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: 25 The ants ... 26 The conies ... 27 **The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands**; 28 The spider ...

God uses the same principles to unite the assemblies of his people. We sometimes speak of “the autonomy of the local church,” but autonomy does not mean anarchy. The Holy Spirit unites the assemblies through the Scripture, leading to a striking unity of faith and practice among groups who have never met one another. As one group sows and another waters, without knowledge of one another, God receives the glory for the harvest. But Babylon, following the example of Nimrod her founder, insists on organizing local churches into a human-led hierarchy. The clearest example of such hierarchies are seen in episcopalian systems, most notably Romanism,⁴ which rules churches through a hierarchy of regional bishops and cardinals, culminating in the pope.

The second feature of ancient Babylon is that it promotes idolatry (chart). After Genesis 10-11, we hear next of Babylon in the description of the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria. The Assyrians deported the Israelites, and brought in people from other conquered countries:

2Ki 17:24 And the king of Assyria brought men from **Babylon**, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. ... 29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. 30 **And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth**, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 **So they feared the LORD**, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

Note 2Ki 17:32. These foreign settlers, led by Babylon, worshipped their idols in high places that Samaria had established, but in doing so claimed to fear the Lord. They intensified the syncretism to which the northern kingdom had already succumbed, and for which the Lord sent them away captive.

Later, Babylon eclipsed Assyria as the dominant power, and was God’s rod to chasten the southern kingdom with captivity. God explained the motive for their captivity in Babylon:

Jer 16:11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; 12 And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: 13 Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and **there shall ye serve other gods day and night**; where I will not shew you favour.⁵

4 I will seek to follow the example of George Salmon in his Regius lectures on *The Infallibility of the Church*, in avoiding the self-contradictory “Roman Catholicism.” He notes in his preface that even Newman uses this term.

Babylon is where God sent Judah when she turned after other gods, so that she could have all the false gods she wanted. Spiritual Babylon is what beces of the church when it tries to combine elements of pagan worship with true Christianity, thus indulging in spiritual fornication.

This syncretistic pressure was already active in the first century, as the letters to Pergamos and Thyatira show. It reached its climax with the supposed conversion of Constantine in AD 312, which relabeled central figures in Roman pagan religion (the Magna Mater, the manes) so they could be worshipped within the framework of nominal Christianity.⁶ It is not surprising that in 17:9 John sees the woman sitting on “seven mountains,” perhaps a reference to the legendary “seven hills” of Rome.⁷

So the name Babylon reinforces the picture we already derived from the title of whore, of an apostate church that incorporates elements of pagan worship. The most prominent example is the Roman Catholic institution, which combines the two features of ancient Babylon: promotion of idolatry, and insistence on centralized human leadership rather than trusting in the leadership of the Holy Spirit. But it would be a mistake to limit the reference to hpRome. Any church that compromises with the world participates in the fornication of Babylon, and the recent effort of Catholics to proclaim their unity with evangelicals is an effort to unify nominal but corrupted churches into a great spiritual counterfeit that leads hungry souls to hell.

17:1-2, Introduction

17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials,—The second flying angel in Rev 14:8 and the seventh bowl judgment in Rev 16:19 announced God’s judgment on Babylon. The events we now witness are part of that judgment.

The angel’s words in introducing the chapter are drawn from Jeremiah 51. Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem in the years before, during, and after the Babylonian attacks that ended in the fall of the southern kingdom and the Babylonian captivity of Judah. God used pagan Babylon to chastise the southern kingdom, just as 120 years earlier he used pagan Assyria to chastise the northern kingdom. But it’s a thankless business to be God’s rod against his beloved people, because inevitably he turns and deals with the rod. Isaiah, among other prophets, records how God will deal with Assyria (chart):

Isa 10:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Similarly, Jeremiah describes God’s judgment on Babylon, in Jeremiah 50-51, as the culmination of a series of oracles against all nations: Egypt (ch. 46), the Philistines (47), Moab (48), Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Qedar, Hazor, and Elam (49), and finally Babylon (50-51). Here are some excerpts from that final prophecy:

5 In Deut 4:25-28 and 28:36, Moses predicted the captivities, giving this same motivation: you want idols, so I’ll give you idols.

6 For details, see “The Antiquity of Pagan Christianity,” <https://cyber-chapel.org/blog/the-antiquity-of-pagan-christianity/>.

7 Thus Alford. One pause is that these are called mountains ὄρος G3735, not hills βουνός G1015. In Latin, some of the seven hills are called *mons*, while others are called *collis* (Wikipedia). I do not know the Greek secular literature well enough to know whether anyone ever described the Roman hills with ὄρος, but Alford’s citations on 17:9 confirm that Latin authors at least (e.g., Martial iv. 64) can describe them as *montes*.

Jer 51:7 Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, **that made all the earth drunken:** the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. ... 12 Set up the standard upon the walls of **Babylon**, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of **Babylon**. 13 **O thou that dwellest upon many waters**, abundant in treasures, **thine end** is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

Zechariah summarizes this general pattern:

Zec 2:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory⁸ hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for **he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye**. 9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

This pattern, of God using a wicked power as his rod, only to turn and destroy it, is not over. The experiences of Israel and Judah anticipate his dealings with all the earth (Table 1). Now, in introducing the final cycle of this pattern, the angel uses Babylon as a symbol for the apostate church who affiliates herself with the Beast, and recalls Jeremiah 51 to anticipate her judgment.

	North (Israel)	South (Judah)	The Earth
God's Rod	Assyria	Babylon	Satan and his Beasts
Fall	721 BC	586 BC	Any day now ...
Major prophet	Isaiah 1-39	Jeremiah	John (Revelation)
Prophecy against the rod	Isaiah 10	Jeremiah 50-51	Revelation 17-21

Table 1: God's Rods and their Judgments

and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:—The reference to “many waters” is from Jer 51:13. The “many waters” probably refer to the network of canals between the Tigris and Euphrates that enhanced Babylon’s wealth, both by enriching her crops and by facilitating trade. The angel quotes Jeremiah’s prophecy of Babylon’s fall, to introduce his own description of “the judgment of the great whore” Babylon.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.—Here the angel cites Jer 51:7.

Isaiah esteemed it “strange” and “foreign” when God brought judgment against his own people:

Isa 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, **his strange work**; and bring to pass his act, **his strange act**.

Thus he eventually punished those whom he used to chastise them. But in a larger sense, all men are God’s offspring:

Act 17:28 as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as **we are the offspring of God**, ...

Though their wickedness demands that he judge them, the instruments of that judgment cannot hope to escape his wrath.

8 See Smith, WBC 32, for summary of interpretations of “after the glory.” He points approvingly to Hanson’s link with the return of the divine glory to the rebuilt temple in *Dawn of Apocalyptic* pp. 249-250.

17:3-18, Babylon Rides the Beast

This chapter falls naturally into two parts. First John sees a vision, then an angel explains it to him. This structure is suggested by the description of the vision as a “mystery” (17:5). The word “mystery” in the canonical LXX is limited to Daniel 2,⁹ where our version translates it “secret.” It describes Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue, a system of symbols that requires interpretation, provided by Daniel. We saw it earlier in Rev 1:20, describing the seven stars and the seven candlesticks, which the Lord interprets as seven churches and the messengers they sent to John. In 10:7 it describes the entire sweep of OT prophetic revelation, which is made clear in its NT fulfillment. So here, we begin with the vision, followed by the interpretation.

3-6, John’s Vision

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness:—“The wilderness” ἔρημος G2048 is another allusion to a prophetic description of Babylon, this time from Isaiah (chart).¹⁰

Isa 21:1 The burden of the **desert** [LXX ἔρημος G2048] of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the **desert**, from a terrible land. . . . 9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen**; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

Mesopotamia, like Egypt, is a narrow band of green along major rivers, surrounded by desert. Historic Babylon is in the desert, and that’s where the angel takes John to see her.¹¹ Just as Babylon here “sits on many waters” and yet is in “the desert,” Isa 21:1 speaks enigmatically of “the desert of the sea.” We will hear “is fallen, is fallen” again in Rev 18:2.

and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet κόκκινος G2847 coloured beast, full [neuter—the beast, not the woman] of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.—We need first to identify the beast, then understand what it means for the woman to sit upon it.

The beast is described by its color, its heads, and its horns.

The color recalls the satanic dragon whom we met in chapter 12,

Rev. 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red πυρρός G4450 dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

“Red” πυρρός G4450 means “fire-colored,” and focuses on the appearance, while “scarlet” κόκκινος G2847 refers to the source of red dye, a small insect. The latter word here links to the description of the woman in v. 4, emphasizing that she, like the beast, resembles the dragon.

The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with a crown on each head. As we noted in 12:3 and 13:2, the image comes from Daniel 7, which begins with a vision of four beasts, representing the four empires of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2.

Dan 7:3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first was like a lion, . . . 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, . . . 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the

9 In relying on the OT parallel (rather than Paul’s use of the term) I am following Beale. In discussing the term in 10:7 (p. 543), he defines it as “that which is understood only when accompanied by further revelation.”

10 Like Jeremiah’s, Isaiah’s judgment on Bablylon is part of a longer series on other nations, from 13:1-23:18.

11 The only other place we see the “wilderness” in the Revelation is as the refuge of the woman in 12:6, 14, and some have suggested that Babylon is the result of apostasy on the part of that woman. . . .

beast had also four heads; ... 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

Collectively, these beasts have $1 + 1 + 4 + 1 =$ seven heads, and the last has ten horns. Daniel's angelic guide explains to him,

Dan 7:17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

The third is Alexander the great, and its four heads represent the Diadochi, four of Alexander's generals who took over his kingdom. So each head is a kingdom, explaining the seven crowns, one for each head.

The beasts that Daniel sees represent historical kingdoms. The dragon is Satan. The imagery reminds us that the power behind the political leaders of this earth is Satanic.

We see the seven heads and horns not only in Daniel's four beasts and John's vision of the dragon, but also in the beast from the sea in chapter 13:

Rev. 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

This time there are ten crowns, not seven, apparently one for each horn. Again, in Daniel's vision, the horns are said to represent kings emerging from the fourth (Roman) beast:

Dan 7:24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise:

Recall that the feet and legs of the statue in Daniel 2 end in ten toes. While John's vision of Satan looks back to seven past rulers, the ten horns and their crowns look forward to "kings that shall arise" in the end times.

The beast of chapter 17 is the same one that we saw in chapter 13, the Antichrist. He exercises worldwide political power through the kings that support him.

... **sit upon a ... beast**—Sitting on a beast is an attempt to ride and control it. We have seen numerous references to riders "sitting" on horses: 6:2, 4-5; 9:17; 19:11, 18-19, 21. This woman, representing the apostate church, seeks to ride the beast, the political ruler. The literal meaning of this metaphor is spelled out in the last verse of the chapter (chart):¹²

Rev 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which **reigneth over the** kings of the earth.

Throughout history, the relation between religious and political authorities has always been very close. 3000 years before Christ, the Egyptian Pharaoh was recognized as a god, and until the defeat of Japan in 1945, so was the Japanese emperor. In the Roman republic the head of the Roman religion was the pontifex maximus, "supreme high priest."¹³ When the republic became an empire, the emperor assumed this title. Starting with Augustus, some emperors were elevated to divine status at their death, and the provinces often honored them as gods during their lives.

12 This interpretation of the vision, and its application to the Vatican's attempt to control secular governments, is developed and documented at length in Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994.

13 The title is now ascribed to the Pope, one of many ways in which the Vatican preserves the ancient Roman pagan religion.)

Even when the institutions are separate, both sides often recognize the need for close cooperation. We traced the symbolism of the title “harlot” back to OT condemnations of Israel’s apostasy, and on a number of points the behavior of the Jewish leaders toward our Lord anticipates the behavior of the apostate church in the end times. A major concern of the Jerusalem priests in the first century was to maintain good relations with their Roman political lords, and this largely motivated their opposition to Christ. Recall the concern of the Jewish leaders when the Lord raised Lazarus:

Jhn 11:47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: **and the Romans shall come** and take away both our place and nation.

Their first concern was to maintain good relations with Rome. The apostate Jewish temple sought to ride the Roman beast.

This relation is particularly clear in European history. The Roman Catholic institution originated under the sponsorship of the emperor Constantine, and European monarchs were often crowned by, and derived their authority from, the pope. In turn, the state protected the church and punished those whom she condemned as heretics. (Compare how the Jews persuaded Rome to execute the Lord.) At the height of her political power, Rome set up kings, and had the power to topple them: an excommunicated monarch lost his authority, and his people could lawfully rebel against him.¹⁴ The church rode the political beast.

Since the enlightenment, state power has been less focused in a single monarch, and the influence of the Vatican has been less direct, but the woman still seeks to ride the beast. Rome has established a series of treaties, or concordats, with major powers whom she considers important to her interests.¹⁵ In 1933 she entered a concordat with Germany, whom she thought was likely to win the war, and under its influence refrained from speaking out on the atrocities of German rule,¹⁶ hoping thereby to preserve Catholic institutions in German-controlled areas. More recently, she has sought agreements with the People’s Republic of China to allow Catholic churches to operate. She continues to try to ride the political beast.

But Rome is not alone in these ambitions. The “evangelical church” has become a critical political player in American politics, actively courted by the right, and some evangelicals believe it the task of the church to guide our government. It is a blessing to live in a country that honors the principles of God’s word, but we are strangers and pilgrims in the earth:

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims** on the earth.

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Strangers and pilgrims do not get involved in the politics of the countries they visit.

Our Lord declared,

14 The classic example is the conflict between the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII in 1077: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Road_to_Canossa. But the ride was rough. This event was part of the investiture controversy (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Investiture_Controversy), in which kings claimed the right to choose and install Bishops, a right that China now asserts over the Roman Catholic church.

15 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concordat>

16 Documented in Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*. 1964, 2000.

Jhn 18:36 Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Until the Father sends him back to set up his rule in Jerusalem, his true church has no business trying to ride the beast. We are to live in subjection to the powers that God allows to arise:

Rom 13:1 Let every soul **be subject unto the higher powers**. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Tit 3:1 Put them in mind to **be subject to principalities and powers**, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

We may disobey them only when they command us to disobey God:

Act 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men**.

Our business is to preach the gospel to every creature—not the gospel of one political creed or another, but the good news of our Savior’s victory over our sin and the new life he offers us.

Riding the beast is not for God’s true children. It is, however, the ambition of the harlot, the apostate church. Her ride ends very badly for her:

Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.¹⁷

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple πορφύρεως G4210 and scarlet κόκκινος G2847 colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls,—The wording recalls Jeremiah’s description of the rich clothing of a harlot (chart):

Jer 4:30 And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson [LXX κόκκινος G2847], though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

Her clothing is dyed in precious colors, purple (obtained from Phoenician bivalves) and scarlet (from scale insects). The scarlet reflects the color of the beast that she rides (17:3), which in turn recalls the fiery red dragon (12:3), showing their relation to one another. These two specific colors also recall Isaiah’s condemnation of the apostate Jerusalem:

Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as **scarlet [purple] φοινικοῦς**,¹⁸ they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like **crimson κόκκινος G2847**, they shall be as wool. ... 21 How is the faithful city become an harlot!

Contrast her gaudy garments with the pure white linen of the bride of Christ:

Rev 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in **fine linen, clean and white**: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:—We return to Jeremiah’s vision of Babylon’s fall, which lay behind 17:1,2,

17 Lewy documents the intentions of the Nazis to do away with the church after winning the war.

18 BDAG: a purple color. Word does not appear elsewhere in the Greek Bible. Heb is ארגמן H713, usually translated πορφύρα G4209, same root

Jer 51:7 **Babylon hath been a golden cup** in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

The woman is a consumer of the costly commodities described in this verse. In the next chapter, we will meet those who sell them, and who profit by her lust for them:

Rev. 18:12 The merchandise of **gold**, and silver, and **precious stones**, and of **pearls**, and fine linen, and **purple**, and silk, and **scarlet**, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY,—The word is probably not part of her name, but of its description. John's vision, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, is a mystery, requiring interpretation. Starting in 17:7, the angel will give the interpretation.

BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.—When we began Revelation 17, we considered the biblical background of historical Babylon and its spiritual significance as a symbol of hierarchical authority and promotion of idolatry. John is not the only one who recognizes this symbolic function of the ancient city. Paul shares his view (chart).

The letters to the churches in chapters 2-3 show that the temptation to syncretize with idols was pervasive in the Gentile churches of Asia Minor. It was the subject of one of the four rules that the conference in Jerusalem in Acts 15 asked the Gentile believers to observe. Corinth, a major Greek city, faced this temptation, and Paul's two letters to them frequently engage this question. They raised it in a letter to him that stimulated 1 Corinthians (cf. 7:1):

1Co 8:1 Now **as touching things offered unto idols**, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

He devotes the entire chapter to this question. Some of the Corinthians thought they could participate in idolatry, while continuing to serve the Lord. Paul disabuses them of this illusion.

In his follow-up letter, he further exhorts them to abstain from idolatry:

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore **come out from among them**, and **be ye separate, saith the Lord**, and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Pay attention to the phrase "saith the Lord" in 2 Cor 6:17. Paul is not composing these words. He is quoting them from Isaiah:

Isa 52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, **go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her;** be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.¹⁹

In Isaiah, God promises to deliver Israel from the Babylonian captivity. When he ends Babylon's power with the invasion of Cyrus, Cyrus permits any Jews who wished to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Isa 52:11 is exhorting them to take advantage of this invitation when it

19 Other passages are mingled in. "I will receive you" is from Ezek 20:34 "I ... will gather you," and the sons and daughter language is a mixture of 2 Sam 7:8, 14 and Isa 43:6, justifying the final "saith the Lord Almighty."

comes. That is, Isaiah is urging them to leave the idols of Babylon and return to the pure worship of God. When Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to abandon the idols of their culture, he uses a verse that in context is saying, “Leave Babylon.” As in Revelation 17, Babylon has become a symbol for a corrupt church that is compromised with idolatry. (Bilson)

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:—Both of the images given us in this chapter, Babylon and the harlot, are characterized by their murderous attitude toward God’s people (chart).

Babylon smote Jerusalem not once, but three times, subjecting her to deadly sieges and eventually taking the people into captivity.

The spiritual harlot, God’s apostate people, not only abandon the Lord for false gods, but seek to slay those who are faithful to him. Again, the image echoes the OT. In Jeremiah 2, the Lord recalls his espousals with Israel in the wilderness, but then recounts her unfaithfulness to him, leading to the verdict (chart).

Jer 3:1 thou hast **played the harlot** with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 2 is a detailed indictment of her sins, and includes this accusation:

Jer 2:30 **your own sword hath devoured your prophets**, like a destroying lion. ... 34 Also in thy skirts is found **the blood of the souls of the poor innocents**:

Our Lord condemns Jerusalem for her murderous treatment of those who are faithful to the Lord:

Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that **killest the prophets**, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

And he alerts his disciples that this opposition from apostate Israel will continue:

Jhn 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

In Acts, we have seen how fiercely the Jews pursued Paul, seeking to put him to death. In the centuries since, Romanism has been noted for its murderous persecution of true believers. In the days of Wycliffe, even possession of his English translation of the NT was punishable by death. This image of the murderous harlot is consistent with the policies promoted by the false prophet, the beast from the earth, in Revelation 13.

and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.—“Admiration” G2295 is the noun cognate to the verb “wonder.” It denotes amazement, but not admiration in the sense of approval. Καὶ ἐθαύμασα ... θαῦμα μέγα is a Greek imitation of the Hebrew infinitive absolute,

7-18, The Angel’s Interpretation

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?—This word family²⁰ appears seven times in the Revelation, in three places (Figure 5).

20 θαῦμα G2295 a wonder or marvel; θαυμάζω G2296 to wonder or be amazed; θαυμαστός G2298 wonderful, marvelous. θαυμάσιος G2297 “wonderful” appears only once in the NT, in Matt 21:15

First, it describes the reaction of all the world to the beast after his apparent resurrection:

Rev. 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world **wondered** after the beast.

Next, we see it twice in Revelation 15, describing God's judgments:

Rev. 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and **marvellous**, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and **marvellous** are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

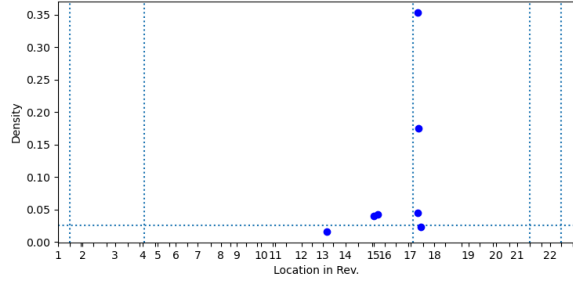


Figure 5: θαυμα* wonder, marvel, amazement

Chapters 13 and 15 set up a competition. Wonder or marvel is an aspect of worship. Who is worthy of marvel, Satan's beast or the Lord?

By far the densest concentration is here in chapter 17. In 17:6, John marvels at the woman riding the beast, an unhealthy alliance with unbelievers (13:3). So the angel's response is almost a rebuke. "Save your wonder for the Lord. Don't waste it on this woman." And in 17:8, he shows where the wonder offered by the world to the woman culminates: the beast goes into perdition.

I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.—Just as Daniel explained Nebuchadnezzar's mysterious dream, the angel will interpret the symbolism of the woman.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; ... the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.—He begins by identifying the beast with the one we met in Revelation 13. That beast was marked by its recovery from a deadly wound (chart):

Rev 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

It was, and now is not, but John sees it again, in an imitation of resurrection.

This title of the Beast (repeated a third time in 17:11) is a parody of the one who was, and is, and is to come, a persistent title for the Lord:

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from **him which is, and which was, and which is to come**; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Rev 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith **the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come**, the Almighty.

Rev 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, **which was, and is, and is to come.**

Rev 11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, **which art, and wast, and art to come**; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

As we saw in Revelation 13, the beast out of the abyss is the Satanic counterpart to the Son of God. But his origin and ultimate destiny are very different:

and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit,—He has been described thus twice before. (“Bottomless pit” ἄβυσσος G12 in the LXX translates תהום H8415, which is often used in parallel with ים H3220 “sea.”)

11:7 ... the beast that **ascendeth out of the bottomless pit** shall make war against them,...

13:1 And I ... saw a beast **rise up out of the sea**, having seven heads and ten horns, ...

and go into perdition:—The noun G684 is most common (5/18 instances in the NT) in 2 Peter (2 Pet. 2:1, 3; 3:7, 16), describing the destiny of false teachers, and in 2 Thess 2:3 the Antichrist is called “the son of perdition,” a Hebrew idiom for one characterized by perdition. The word indicates “not loss of being, but of well-being” (Vine). It is used for a spoiled wineskin (Lk 5:37) or a lost sheep (Lk 15:4, 6), and here anticipates the Beast’s final destiny in the lake of fire,

Rev 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet ... These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Contrast our Lord’s summary of his mission:

Jhn 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Our Lord came down from heaven, and has ascended back to heaven. This beast ascended (11:7; 13:1) out of the demonic pit, and ends in damnation.

and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.—But oblivious of his origin and destiny, people still worship him.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom.—As in 13:18, the imagery requires a discerning mind (chart):

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

There, the mysterious number, requiring interpretation, describes a person. Here our attention is drawn to a symbolic location:

The seven heads—The angel develops the symbolism of the seven heads. In Daniel 7, these reflected the kingdoms of the dream in Daniel 2: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece (with four diadochi), and finally Rome. Here the number “seven” is developed into two images. One is a set of kingdoms, but different from those of Daniel. The other is a set of mountains.

are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.—The walls of Rome encircle seven hills, and since antiquity, Rome has been known as the city on seven hills. A coin from the reign of the emperor Vespasian (about AD 70) depicts Roma, a goddess personifying the Roman state, seated on seven hills (Figure 6). This reference to seven mountains associates the woman with the city of Rome,²¹ reinforcing the fulfillment in the apostate Christian church, most notably Romanism.

10 And there [or, they] are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.—A second interpretation of the

21 See notes for alternative interpretations.

seven heads is as seven kings. Some commentators attempt to identify them with specific Roman emperors, but no credible alignment has been proposed. A better solution is to see the kings as representing empires, as in Daniel 7:17.

Dan 7:17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

There, the focus was on the four beasts, which are Babylon, Persia, Greece (with four heads), and Rome. Here, the focus is on the kings, but they cannot be aligned with Daniel’s kingdoms. Rome is the last beast and the last head in Daniel’s vision, but here Rome as the current empire must be the sixth head, for the seventh kingdom still lies in the future.

Table 2 (chart) summarizes the various visions and suggests how they align with world kingdoms. The distinct seventh head is new. In Daniel 2 and 7 it was simply a feature of the previous kingdom. Daniel, focusing from his time forward, did not discuss earlier empires, but the prophets considered Babylon as the natural successor to two others, Egypt and Assyria. Isaiah, predicting the Babylonian captivity, recalls:²²

Isa 52:4 For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into **Egypt** to sojourn there; and the **Assyrian** oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven,—Each of the eight heads seeks to establish world-wide dominion. The beast grows out of all these efforts, and finally succeeds in achieving world-wide dominion, mimicking the risen Christ.

and goeth into perdition.—In spite of his temporary dominion, he is destined to destruction.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.—These correspond to the ten toes on



Figure 6: Coin of Vespasian (ca. AD 70) showing the goddess Roma sitting on the seven hills of Rome. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

World Empire	Daniel 2: Statue	Daniel 7: Beasts	Rev 17:10: Heads	Rev 17:12: Horns
1. Egypt			1	
2. Assyria			2	
3. Babylon	v 32, 38, Head of Gold	v 4, Lion	3	
4. Media-Persia	v 32, 39, Arms of Silver	v 5, Bear	4	
5. Greece with Diadochi	v 32, 39, Belly & Thighs of Brass	v 6, Leopard with four heads	5	
6. Rome	v 33, 40, Legs of Iron	v 7, Great & Terrible	6	
7. Future	v 33, 42-42, Feet of Iron & Clay, Toes	v 7, Ten horns	7	Ten Kings

Table 2: Prophetic Lists of Kings and Kingdoms

²² Hengstenberg makes this alignment very persuasively in his notes on 13:1.

the image of Daniel 2, and the ten horns of Dan 7:7, 24. They were future in Daniel’s time, and are still future as John writes.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.—It is extremely difficult to get multiple nations to agree on anything, particularly one with high risk, such as surrendering control of national security to another party. Here the angel simply notes the amazing fact of their political unity. In v. 17, we will learn what makes this unified opposition to the Lamb possible.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings:—When they appear, they support the beast in seeking to overthrow the Lord’s rule in open battle.

Figure 7 (chart) shows the distribution of the noun “war” and the cognate verb “make war” throughout the Revelation. It is clearly concentrated in chapters 12-13, beginning with Satan’s war in heaven (12:7), then (after he is cast out) with the saints (12:17, 13:7).

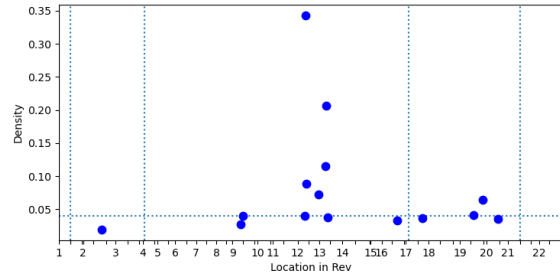


Figure 7: πόλεμος polemos G4171 and πολεμέω polemeō G4170 in the Revelation

This verse answers a question posed in Rev 13:4:

Rev 13:4 ... and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? **who is able to make war with him?**

At first he appears to triumph, but this verse reminds us that at the end he is defeated. The Lord threatened war against his adversaries in his letter to Pergamos,

Rev. 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will **fight [war]** against them with the sword of my mouth.

The sixth bowl angel in Revelation 16 shows that this war is more than a local skirmish:

Rev. 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to **the battle of that great day of God Almighty.**

That great battle occurs in Revelation 19-20, when the Lord returns and conquers Satan.

This victory is first of all attributed to the Lamb, who is said here to “overcome νικάω nikaō G3528 them.” The Lamb is showing his character as the Lion.

“Overcoming” is a major theme throughout the book (Figure 8). Satan and his minions are said to overcome four times, and the Lord three times, but saints are the overwhelming overcomers (ten times). In every letter to a churches in Revelation 2-3, the Lord encourages them to overcome. When Satan is cast out of heaven, we learn how saints overcome his accusations in heaven’s court:

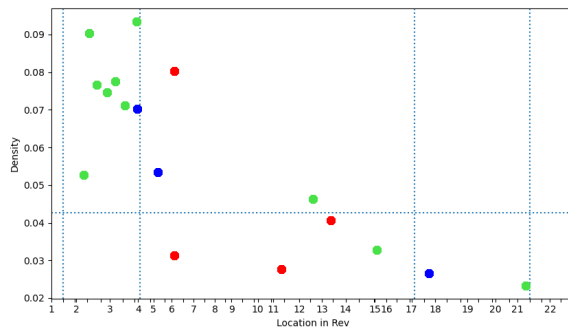


Figure 8: Overcome νικάω nikaō G3528 in the Revelation. Green: saints; Blue: the Lord; Red: evil

Rev. 12:11 And they **overcame** him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

And in Rev 15:2, the martyred saints in heaven are described as “them that had gotten the victory [overcome].” What enables them to overcome?

and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful.—The clause has no independent verb. Following Alford, and motivated by the characteristic use of νικάω in the book, we are to understand them as conquering also: “they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful, also overcome them.” Thus we see them in the summary scene in Revelation 15,

Rev. 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had **gotten the victory** *nikaō* over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

“Called” and “chosen” reflect the distinction in our Lord’s words:

Mat 20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: **for many be called, but few chosen.**

They have responded to his call, and unlike those “who for a while believe and then fall away” (Lk 8:13), they are indeed his chosen ones. His Spirit within them enables them to be faithful to the requirements of chapters 2-3, so that each of them becomes “he that overcometh.”

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.—This is the last of seven lists like this, describing the scope of both the opposition to God’s authority and the provision of redemption (Table 3, chart). These lists are based on the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, which summarizes how the various nations descended from Noah’s three sons, and on descriptions of the universal claims of Babylonian and Persian kings (and ultimately the Messiah) in Daniel.²³ In Genesis:

	Theme	λαός G2992 People	ἔθνος G1484 Nation	γλῶσσα G1100 Tongue	βασιλεύς G935 King	φυλή G5443 Tribe	ὄχλος G3793 Multitude
5:9	Who is redeemed?	3	4	2		1	
7:9	Who is able to stand?	3	1	4		2	
10:11	Against whom does John prophesy?	1	2	3	4		
11:9	Who opposes God’s prophets?	1	4	3		2	
13:7	Over whom does the beast have power?	2	4	3		1	
14:6	To whom is the everlasting gospel preached?	4	1	3		2	
17:15	Over whom does the Whore rule?	1	3	4			2

Table 3: Universal Lists in the Revelation. Numbers are order of terms in a given verse. Color of reference shows whether the list describes those in God’s favor (blue) or those opposed to him (red). Red sequence numbers indicate unique instances.

23 See note for the differences between the lists in Genesis 10 and those in the Revelation. “Families” in the LXX is φυλή, generally translated “tribe” in the Revelation.”Countries”10:20 and “lands”10:30 are χώρα G5561, and “generations” is γένεσις G1078, neither of which is used in the lists in the Revelation. Daniel uses a triple form: Dan 3:4, 7, 31 [4:1]; 5:19; 6:25 [26]; 7:14; cf. also 3:29 (Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, ch. 9:10.

Gen. 10:5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his **tongue**, after their **families**, in their **nations**. [Japheth]

Gen. 10:20 These are the sons of **Ham**, after their **families**, after their **tongues**, in their **countries**, and in their **nations**.

Gen. 10:31 These are the sons of **Shem**, after their **families**, after their **tongues**, in their **lands**, after their **nations**.

Gen. 10:32 These are the **families** of the **sons of Noah**, after their **generations**, in their **nations**: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

These echoes of Genesis 10 emphasize the universality of sin and the offer of salvation. Both of these are shared by every descendant of Noah. Daniel offers another echo:

Dan. 3:29 Therefore I [Nebuchadnezzar] make a decree, That every **people, nation, and language**, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces,

Dan 6:25 Then king Darius wrote unto all **people, nations, and languages**, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

Dan 7:14 And there was given [the Son of Man] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all **people, nations, and languages**, should serve him:

Here, the list emphasizes the goal of political rulers—frustrated for Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, but realized finally by the Son of Man.

While most of these terms are repeated, two appear only in a single list each. “King” in 10:11 emphasizes the political implications of the repeated prophecy that John is charged to deliver. The other singleton is “multitude” in our verse, ὄχλος *ochlos* G3793, which appears three other times in the Revelation, each time describing the heavenly multitude of the redeemed (chart):

Rev. 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great **multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Rev. 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much **people** in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Rev. 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great **multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

All the other uses of this term are in the gospels and Acts, describing the crowds to whom the gospel was preached, and who often turned against the Lord and the disciples. The apostate church whips up the people against the saints, as the apostate temple stirred up the multitudes against our Lord and his apostles, but she cannot stop the Lord from having his multitude.

At first, “multitudes” seems a strange word in a list like this. The others all describe ethnic or political groups, but a multitude spans these divisions. The use of “multitudes,” joined with “peoples” and syntactically set off from the last two terms,²⁴ contrasts those who submit to the beast, and those who follow the Lamb. God has his multitude, and the only two uses of “people” λαός *laos* G2992 in Revelation that are not in this formula, also describe believers:

24 λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι **εἰσὶν**, καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι. I owe this insight to Bauckham (see notes).

Rev. 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, **my people**, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be **his people**, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Thus this choice of terms reminds us that in spite of the widespread dominion and great power of the beast, and the support he receives from the apostate church, God's people overcome.

The appearance of multitudes supporting rival authorities, the Lord and the whore, reminds us of the power of groups to influence those who associate with them.²⁵ God warned Israel at Sinai,

Exo 23:2 Thou shalt not follow a **multitude** רבים πολύς to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after **many** רבים πολύς to wrest judgment:

When everyone around us is violating God's law, it is easy to dismiss the voice of conscience. "Look at all these people who think it's OK. I must be out of line." \

The dynamic can work in the other direction as well. David, in exile from Absalom, recalls,

Psa 42:4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the **multitude** סך, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a **multitude** המון that kept holyday.²⁶

He was spiritually encouraged and strengthened when he associated with others of "like precious faith" (2 Pet 1:1).

Paul exhorts the Corinthians with the general principle.²⁷

1Co 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications [associations] corrupt good manners.

This principle emphasizes why it is important that we not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb 10:25). The motive for gathering with God's people is not that we get points with God for spending our time this way. Rather, we are so constituted psychologically that our values and decisions will be affected by those with whom we associate. If we would serve the Lord faithfully and resist the adversary's attacks, we need to practice the power of the multitude, and be with God's people.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked,—Multitudes are powerful, but fickle, and they turn against the whore. The language here comes from the OT prophetic judgments against apostate Jerusalem,²⁸ and reinforces our identification of the harlot with the apostate church (chart).

Ezk 23:22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up **thy lovers** against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; ... 25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and **thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.** ... 26 They shall also **strip thee out of thy clothes**, and take away thy fair jewels. ... 29 And

25 See note on the Greek and Hebrew vocabulary for "multitude." These verses do not use the Hebrew antecedents of ὄχλος, but reflect the more common and semantically more general terms πολύς and πλῆθος.

26 The LXX has no clear translations of the two Hebrew words for "multitude."

27 See commentaries for evidence that this may be a common proverb of his day.

28 Beale does a good job of tracing the OT allusions here.

they shall deal with thee **hatefully**, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall **leave thee naked and bare**: and the **nakedness** of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.—These two aspects of her judgment are startling at first. The usual punishment for infidelity in the OT is stoning, not burning, and what does “eating her flesh” mean?

Both may reflect OT antecedents. Being burned with fire was the punishment for particularly heinous forms of fornication:

Lev 20:14 And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: **they shall be burnt with fire**, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you.

Lev 21:9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: **she shall be burnt with fire.**

It thus reinforces Babylon as a symbol of spiritual apostasy. And the devouring of flesh recalls the fate of Jezebel, as prophesied by Elijah to Ahab, fulfilled in 2 Kings 9.

1Ki 21:23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, **The dogs shall eat Jezebel** by the wall of Jezreel. 24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

The Lord applied the name Jezebel to a female teacher in Thyatira who “seduce[d] my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev 2:20), and her fate may inspire this doom upon Babylon.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.—The angel emphasizes that these end-time kings, and their support of the satanic beast, are all under God’s control, to accomplish his purposes and fulfill his word.²⁹

The first two clauses in Greek emphasize his sovereign control: “to do his purpose, and to do one purpose.” We saw this last phrase in v. 13 as well. Politically, unity of purpose is extremely difficult to achieve. The kings no doubt think that their agreement in support of the beast is a sign of great political maturity, a new age of worldwide peace and suppression of foolish superstition (such as Christianity). But in fact their purpose is God’s purpose, in order to fulfill his eternal promise.

The unified purpose in 17:13 is to make war against the Lamb. Yet that purpose comes from God. It is his purpose that they would oppose his Son, so that the justice of their destruction will be clear to all the watching universe. The same purpose operates here as with Pharaoh:

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.—This summary of the chapter confirms our understanding that in trying to ride the beast, harlot Babylon, the apostate church, seeks to exercise political control.

²⁹ Compare the lying spirit from God’s throne in 1 Kings 22, or the contrast between 2 Sam 24:1 and 1 Chr 21:1.

18:1-24, Babylon's Funeral

Revelation 17 showed us the great whore, the apostate church, and her relation to the Antichrist. It ended with her destruction by the very political forces she sought to control. The next chapter shows her demise from two perspectives (Figure 9, chart). Voices from heaven proclaim her doom, and instruct God's people how to respond to it, while her friends lament her decease.

The Figure shows several features that will help us make our way through the chapter.

First, the sections **change speakers**:

- 18:1-2 another angel ... cried
- 18:4 another voice from heaven, saying ...
- 18:21 a mighty angel ... saying

Second, the voice from heaven includes a long **lament** from kings, merchants, and sailors who profited from Babylon. This lament has strong internal structure.

Third, apart from the quotation from the friends of Babylon, the utterances of the heavenly voices **alternate** between **dooms** (declarations of the destruction of Babylon) and **commands** for God's people. The laments from Babylon's friends are an extension of the second, central doom.

Fourth, each doom and command has a **reason**, introduced by the word "for" (ὅτι *hoti* G3754).

With this road map, let's work our way through the chapter.

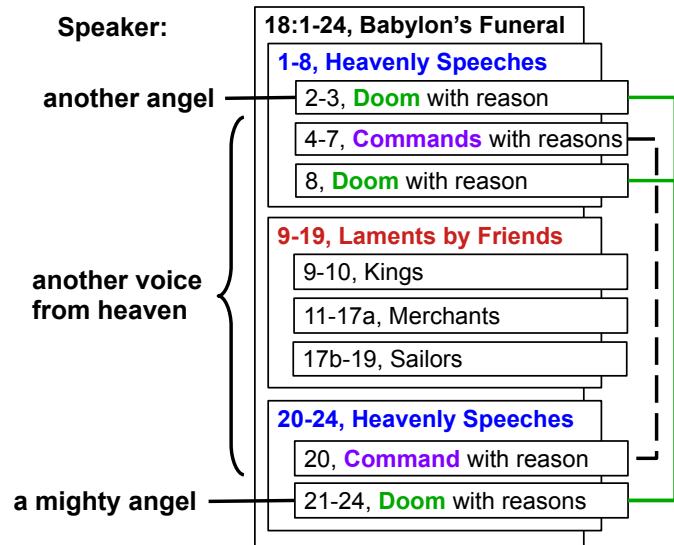


Figure 9: Structure of Revelation 18

1-8, Heavenly Speech

The alternating dooms and commands mark three paragraphs in these verses (Figure 10, chart)

1-3, First Doom

18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.—Compare the appearance of the angel of the Lord to announce the Lord's birth:

Luk 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the **glory** of the Lord **shone** round about them: and they were sore afraid. ... 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The darkness of sin is dissipated by both the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of false, idolatrous religion.

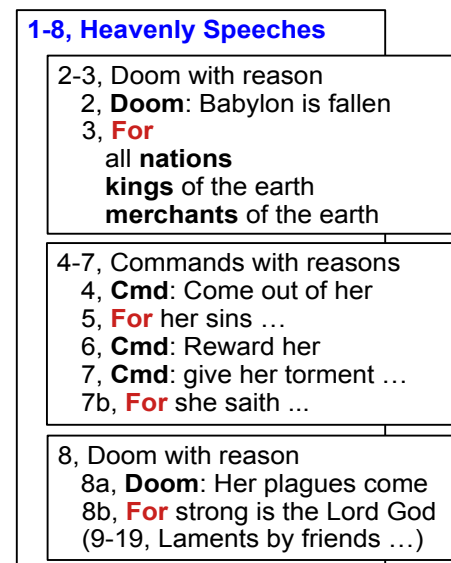


Figure 10: Structure of Initial Heavenly Speeches

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,— The imagery is drawn from Isaiah’s prophecy of the fall of the historic kingdom of Babylon, also cited already in 17:3:

Isa 21:9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen;** and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

Note the emphasis on the destruction of her idols, supporting our interpretation of the imagery of fornication throughout Revelation 17 as the idolatry that threatened the seven churches.

and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.—The angel continues to allude to Isaiah’s prophecies of Babylon:³⁰

Isa 13:19 And **Babylon, the glory of kingdoms**, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. 21 But **wild beasts** of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of **doleful creatures**; and **owls** shall dwell there, and **satyrs** shall dance there. 22 And the **wild beasts** of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and **dragons** in their pleasant palaces: ...

Each doom and command has a reason, introduced with the conjunction “for” (*ὅτι hoti* G3754). The reason for the first doom is her extensive influence in propagating spiritual fornication, or idolatry. That influence is threefold: social, political, and commercial.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,—Socially, she has influenced every nation, every ethnic group.

The “all nations” may be reflected in the seamen in the next section

and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her,—Politically, she has sought to harness the power of civil government in support of her idolatry. Both of these descriptions restate the initial description of the woman (chart):

Rev 17:2 With whom **the kings of the earth have committed fornication**, and the **inhabitants** of the earth have been **made drunk with the wine of her fornication**.

and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.—The echoes of the description in Revelation 17 continue. “Delicacies” describes wanton luxuries, reflecting her tastes:

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in **purple and scarlet** colour, and decked with **gold** and precious **stones** and **pearls**, having a **golden cup** in her hand

Note that the woman is a customer for the goods the merchants sell, not herself the seller.

4-7, Three Commands

Now the voice changes, and the theme shifts from announcing judgment to exhorting the saints.

³⁰ Isa 13:20 “shall never be inhabited” invites further study. Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled with the conquest of the city by Cyrus, for Babylon was active well into the Christian era (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon#History>). I’m inclined to see the fall of Babylon as an instance of manifold fulfillment directed toward the destruction of the great whore as described by John, with the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the fall of the city to Cyrus as intermediate steps.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven,—The speaker is probably not an angel, since he addresses the readers as “my people.” But 18:5 refers to “God” in the third person, and if we are correct that this voice continues through 18:20, it is also not the Father, for there it says, “God hath avenged you on her.” This may well be an exhortation from the exalted Christ.

This voice begins with commands (Figure 10). Figure 11 (chart) shows the structure of these commands. There are only two “for” clauses, setting apart the first command (to leave Babylon) from those that follow (which all deal with punishing her).

First we consider the command to leave Babylon.

saying, **Come out of her, my people**,—Recall comments on 17:5, referencing Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians,

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore **come out from among them**, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, ...

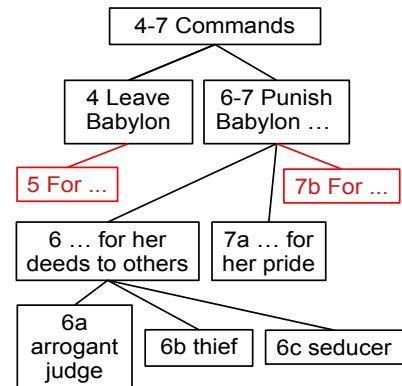


Figure 11: The Commands of 18:4-7

The “wherefore” in v. 17 shows the argument. It introduces a command to come out, but the basis of the command is in v. 16. Both the basis and the command are from the Old Testament.

Let’s consider the basis first. The OT citation is from Leviticus,

Lev 26:3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ... 11 ... I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

Under the old covenant, that promised presence took the form of a physical building. But the NT teaches that now the sanctuary is the assembly of saints:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom **ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit**.

1Pe 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up **a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

In 2 Cor 6:16, the NT temple is the assembled believers (“ye [plural] are the temple of the living God”). As in Revelation 2-3, they are tempted to compromise with idolatry, both politically (the cult of the emperor) and economically (the patron deities of the trade guilds). The great whore is the apostate church, which tolerates idolatry, and that apostasy was already beginning in Paul’s day. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the true temple of God can have no agreement with idols.

The “wherefore” in 2 Cor 6:17 draws a conclusion. Since idols defile the temple of God, God’s people must withdraw themselves from any institution that pretends to be a church, but that

tolerates idolatry. They must “come out from among them.” Like the promise of God’s presence among his people, this exhortation also comes from the OT.

Isa 52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, **go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her;** be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

While much of the content describes the future and the coming of Antichrist, the spiritual influences that lead to Antichrist are already active. This entire book is addressed in the first instance to the seven churches that existed in Asia in the first century:

Rev 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things **in the churches.** :

The antichrist (the beast) is yet future, but both Paul and John recognize his current influence:

2 Thes 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:

1Jn 4:3 this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Already in Revelation 2-3 we see the spirit of syncretism that has taken full hold in the papist hierarchy. God’s people in the first century are exhorted to come out of this wicked system, just as Isaiah exhorted Israel to leave Babylon when they could, and we must continue to separate ourselves from idolatrous perversions of Christianity. Rev 18:4, like 2 Cor 6:17, is a direct command to believers to withdraw from any “church” that tolerates idolatry.

that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.—The reason for the first command actually begins with two purpose clauses, before proceeding to the “for.”

They are to come out for two purposes. The first is to keep them from being drawn into the idolatrous sins of the whore. The second is to avoid the judgments that God will send on her for those sins. The “for” statement assures the hearers that God is fully aware of her wickedness and will deal with it. Alford fittingly compares this warning to two OT examples. The first is Lot,

Gen 19:15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, **Arise**, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; **lest thou be consumed** in the iniquity of the city.

The second is the faithful Israelites at the rebellion of Korah,

Num 16:23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, **Get you up** from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, **Depart**, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, **lest ye be consumed** in all their sins.

This coming judgment is the focus of the following commands (Figure 11, chart): “Reward, double, fill” (18:6), “give” (18:7). Not only must believers come out to avoid being judged, but they help implement that judgment. These commands are most naturally understood as addressed to the same “my people” as 18:4.³¹ When the day of judgment comes (chart),

Rev 19:14 ... the **armies** which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, **clothed in fine linen, white and clean.**

31 Both Hodges-Farstad and Robinson-Pierpont omit the pronoun “you” in 18:6. But 18:4 was addressed to “my people,” and even without the pronoun, it is reasonable to understand 18:6-7 as addressed to the same group.

A few verses earlier, John explains the significance of their uniform:

Rev 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is **the righteousness of saints**.

When the Lord returns in judgment, his saints form the army that supports his attack. In addition, when the Lord sets up his kingdom, the risen saints will rule and judge with him:

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and **judgment** was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and **reigned** with Christ a thousand years.

There are four imperatives in 18:6-7, organized hierarchically, but only one “for” statement supports them, suggesting their close relation. The two top level commands focus on two different grounds for the judgment: the injustice she has inflicted on God’s people (18:6), and her selfish pride (18:7).

The first grounds for her judgment (18:6) is the effect she has had on other people, in seducing them. The command combines three imperatives, all urging the hearers to repay Babylon in kind for what she has done. These imperatives describe Babylon’s judgment under three images of what she has done to other people: she is an arrogant tool of the Lord’s judgment, a thief taking that which is not hers, and a seducer.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you,—The command continues to be addressed to “my people” as in 18:4, but the pronoun “you” is not supported by the majority of manuscripts. God’s people participate in judging Babylon, not for vengeance, but as agents of God’s judgment.

The verb “reward” (see note) implies repayment. It is often used in the LXX for commercial transactions, and with the Lord as the subject, it describes punishment for sin (chart):

Ex. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

It makes sense for God to repay Babylon for her iniquity. But how has she “repaid” others? The best OT parallel here, using a closely related verb in the LXX, is in Psalm 137:

Psa. 137:8 O daughter of **Babylon**, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth **ἀνταποδίδωμι** thee as thou hast served **ἀνταποδίδωμι** us.

Note the parallels: in both cases Babylon is being repaid, and in both cases she has previously repaid someone else.

How did Babylon “repay” Israel in Ps 137:8? She was God’s instrument of chastisement and purification for Israel. Compare God’s discussion of Assyria in Isaiah 10.

Isa 10:5 O Assyrian, **the rod of mine anger**, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. **6 I will send him** against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. ... 13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: ... 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? ... 16

Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

Assyria repaid idolatrous Israel, on God's behalf, for her sins. Ps 137:8 reports that Babylon similarly repaid idolatrous Judah, on God's behalf. The apostate church, in concert with the beast, repays worldly professors of Christianity. But each chastiser seeks its own glory rather than God's, and he repays each of them in turn.

and double unto her double according to her works:—The first imperative indicts Babylon as an arrogant judge. The second is based on Israel's penal code, which required that a thief repay twice the value of the stolen goods (chart):

Exo 22:4 If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; **he shall restore double.** ... 7 If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, **let him pay double.** ... 9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, **he shall pay double** unto his neighbour.

The apostate church has taken that which is not hers, including the glory of God, and the lives and property of true believers. She is punished as a thief would be.

in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.—“The cup which she hath filled” is what Babylon has offered the nations, in 17:4 (chart):

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having **a golden cup in her hand** full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Wine is seductive. At first it brings pleasure, but then leads to shameful drunkenness:

Pro 23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. 32 **At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.**

As part of her seduction, she seeks to intoxicate those she leads astray,³² but this brings them in the end to judgment. She and her cup echo a prophecy of Jeremiah:

Jer 51:7 Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

But one day she herself will join the nations who suffer the wrath of this cup:

Jer 25:15 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take **the wine cup of this fury** at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. ... 17 Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me: 18 To wit, Jerusalem, ... 19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, ... [many more] ... 26 And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of **Sheshach** shall drink after them.

32 It is interesting that Proverbs, which offers the most graphic descriptions of a harlot in the Bible (Prov 7:6-18; 9:13-18), does not associate wine with her, but rather with Dame Wisdom (Prov 9:2, 5).

Jeremiah 51 shows that “Sheshach” is an alternative name for Babel.

Jer 51:41 How is **Sheshach** taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is **Babylon** become an astonishment among the nations!

The relation between the two names is a Hebrew figure of speech called “Athbash,” which replaces each letter in a word with a letter that is the same distance from the end of the alphabet as it is from the front (Figure 12). B is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and S, pronounced “sh,” is the second from the last. Similarly, L is twelfth letter, and K is the twelfth from the end. The name is a mocking way of saying that Babylon is turned upside down and inside out.

BBL → SSK:
)BGDHWZXtYKLMNs(PCQRST
Figure 12: From Babylon (BBL) to Sheshach (SSK) using Athbash

So Babylon is to be judged for what she has done to others: punishing them in pride, taking what is not hers, seducing them.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her:—The second motive for judging her is her proud, self-serving attitude. The indictment has two parts. She has glorified herself, and lived deliciously.

“Glorified herself” (chart) reflects a consistent mark of apostasy in the people of God: the idea that we can deserve God’s favor by our righteous actions. As Paul points out, this attitude intrinsically glorifies us rather than God.

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, **he hath whereof to glory**; but not before God.

How different is the attitude of the true believer:

Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should **glory**, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Even pious actions, if done to draw attention to ourselves, are an abomination to God (chart):

Isa 64:5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. 6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our **righteousnesses** are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Isa 65:3 A people that provoketh me to anger ... 5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for **I am holier** than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that **I am not as other men are**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

This self-glorification is reflected in the titles that apostate churches give their leaders, titles like “reverend,” “your eminence,” and “your holiness.” In doing so they are glorifying themselves.

“Lived deliciously” (στρηνιάω G4763) occurs only once more in the Greek Bible, in v. 9, where it characterizes the kings whom she has seduced. It describes, not just refined tastes, but wantonness. Trench, drawing from secular Greek works, defines it as “the insolence of wealth, the wantonness and petulance from fulness of bread,” observing that (unlike other terms for wantonness) it emphasizes the strength and vigor by which she has attained her exalted position. Clergy in apostate churches often wear rich vestments. The residences of the papal cardinals are

called “palaces,” and they (along with some other bishops) have titles of nobility and coats of arms, “the princes of the church.” The symptom is not limited to liturgical churches. Many community churches are businesses as much as religious institutions, led by graduates of business schools, preaching a prosperity gospel exemplified by pastors with high net wealth and expensive homes.

Both self-glorification and a wanton lifestyle are contrary to the pattern that the Lord Jesus has left his people, and the saints will one day judge them for it.

for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.—The “for” clause summarizes her view of herself, justifying all of the judgments in 6-8 (Figure 11). She sees herself as:

- a queen, with royal authority to impose her will on others, but now she is brought under the king of kings;
- no widow, loved by the kings of the earth, but they will turn against her;
- having no sorrow, but the following doom summarizes what she will experience.

Her protest, like much of the symbolism in this chapter, comes from Isaiah’s oracles against historical Babylon, reinforcing its role as a type of the latter-day apostate church:

Isa 47:7 And thou [Babylon] saidst, I shall be a **lady**³³ for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. 8 Therefore hear now this, thou that art **given to pleasures**, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a **widow**, neither shall I know the loss of children: 9 But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection **for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.**

Isaiah condemns historical Babylon for its association with “sorceries” and “enchantments,” suggesting demonic entanglements, and recalling Paul’s comments about the idols that even in his day were threatening to seduce the believers:

1Co 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

His condemnation is appropriate to churches, like Pergamos and Thyatira, that were yielding to the siren song of idolatry.

8, Second Doom

We have completed the commands of 18:4-7, and now the heavenly voice continues with the second doom (Figure 9).

8 Therefore—The protest of 7b is transitional. It is not only the justification for the command to the saints to judge her, but also the basis for the second doom.

shall her plagues come in one day,—When we studied the bowl judgments, we suggested that their temporal duration was much shorter than the seals or trumpets. The third bowl turns all fresh water to blood, and people can only live about a week without water. The “one day” here

33 Cf. Isa 47:5, “the lady of kingdoms,” i.e., queen.

further emphasizes the swiftness of the coming judgment. It anticipates the “one hour” of 18:10, 17, and 19, and ties the mourners’ laments into this doom.

death, and mourning, and famine;—These recall the four judgments of Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel 14:21: warfare, famine, evil beasts (epitomized by the Antichrist), and pestilence (LXX death). These same judgments were brought by the four horsemen of the first four seals.³⁴ But parallels with the Olivet discourse show that those horsemen have been active for 2000 years. This final burst of judgment takes only a single day, and we will see that it may be even shorter.

and she shall be utterly burned with fire:—As in 17:16, burning was a judgment specially reserved for particularly heinous forms of fornication (a man marrying a woman and her mother, Lev 20:14; a defiled daughter of a priest, Lev 21:9).

for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.—This is not a gradual systematic decay, but a sudden divine stroke.

9-19, Laments by Babylon’s Friends

There is no separate introduction to the speaker in this section. It appears to be spoken by the voice from heaven introduced in 18:4, but is set apart by its own strong internal structure. We should probably view it as an extension of the doom of v. 8.

Most of this section consists of three highly parallel laments, by kings, merchants, and seamen (Table 4). The merchant section begins (18:11-14) with a description of the commodities that the harlot purchased, and that are no longer in demand, after her fall. This section is not part of the parallel structure, and we’ll consider it separately, before going into the parallels.

11-14, Babylon’s Shopping List

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:—“No man buyeth their merchandise.” It’s not the seller who has been destroyed, but a major customer. 18:7 condemns the whore because “she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously,” a life style that was great for their business. There follows a list of the precious things that she treasured, grouped in categories (chart).³⁵

12 The merchandise of³⁶

- a) **gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls,**—(g) Costly jewels head the list.
- b) **and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet,**—(g) Next is expensive clothing.
- c) **and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood,**—(a) These materials furnished her mansions, ...
- d) **and of brass, and iron, and marble,**—(g) ... which were built of these.

34 See notes at https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/rev2/notes/Rev_6-8a.pdf

35 A note discusses the similar list in the lament for Tyre in Ezekiel 27. Many of the commodities are the same, and both passages lament the passing of a great city, but while Tyre was “a merchant of the peoples” (27:3, Heb.), here the customer is mourned, and the merchants who sold to her are lamenting. Also (Bauckham), John’s list is organized by category, but Tyre’s by country of origin. But at the end of Ezekiel 27 that the same three groups mourn for Tyre as mourn here: maritime professionals (27:29-34), kings (35), and other merchants (36).

36 The cases of the nouns vary. The comments mark g(enitive) (groups a, b, d, and g) and a(ccusative) (groups c, e, f, and h). Consistent cases in each category suggests that “beasts and sheep” go with other food items (group f), “bodies” (i.e., slaves) with horses and wagons (group g), and “souls of men” is ominously alone.

Kings, 9-10	Merchants, 11-14; 15-17a	Seamen, 17b-19
	11-14 The merchants of the earth ... (Babylon's shopping list)	
9a And the kings of the earth,	15a The merchants of these things,	17b And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors,
9b who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her,	15b which were made rich by her,	17c and as many as trade by sea,
10a Standing afar off for the fear of her torment,	15c shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment,	17d stood afar off, ...
9b shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,	15d ... weeping and wailing,	... 18a And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, ... 19a And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing,
10b saying, Alas, alas,	16a And saying, Alas, alas,	19b saying, Alas, alas,
10c that great city Babylon,	16b that great city,	18b ... saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19c ... that great city,
10d that mighty city!	16c that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!	19d wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!
10e for in one hour is thy judgment come.	17a For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.	19e for in one hour is she made desolate.

- e) **13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense,**—(a) She delighted in spices and fragrances (note the use of incense in liturgical worship).
- f) **and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep,**—(a) Her table was spread with high-quality food items, ...
- g) **and horses, and chariots wagons,³⁷ and slaves,**—(g) ... and she maintained great agricultural estates (recall the feudal system), with the labor needed to operate them.
- h) **and souls of men.**—(a) Ominously, she treated human souls as simply commodities.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.— Suddenly the pronouns change. In 18:11, the merchants mourned over “her,” but now someone speaks to “thee.” Who is the speaker, and who is being addressed?³⁸ (chart)

In the context, the 2fs pronoun is repeatedly addressed to Babylon.

- 18:10, the kings say, “in one hour is thy judgment come,” shifting from the third person “that great city Babylon” in the first part of the verse.

37 See note. ῥέδι G4480 (here) denotes a four-wheeled cart. A war chariot would be ἄρμα G716.

38 The question is neglected by many commentators. Beale: from the merchants to Babylon. Osborne: from the merchants, but doesn't say to whom. Aune does not identify the speaker, but takes the addressee to be Babylon.

- 18:22-23, a mighty angel uses it five times to declare her doom, again shifting from an immediately preceding reference to “that great city Babylon.”

It is most natural to understand 18:14 as addressed to Babylon, either by the merchants or by the heavenly narrator. But what does it mean? Babylon, not her goods, is being destroyed. The answer probably lies in the biblical principle that death separates us from our goods.³⁹

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and **naked shall I return** thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Ecc 5:15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and **shall take nothing** of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

1 Tim 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain **we can carry nothing out**.

Psa 49:10 ... wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. ... 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; 17 For when he dieth **he shall carry nothing away**: his glory shall not descend after him.

From the perspective of the living, she has left her goods. But those who die continue to be conscious, and from her perspective, her goods have left her. So our Savior exhorts us,

Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

9-10, 15-19, Three Parallel Laments

What remains after setting aside the shopping list of 11-14 is a highly parallel series of laments over Babylon by three groups: kings, merchants, and seamen. 18:3 mentioned two of these:

Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and **the kings of the earth** have committed fornication with her, and **the merchants of the earth** are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The seamen may reflect the “nations” in 18:3, since they bring these goods to Babylon from every nation. The commodities in 18:11-14 recall a similar list in Ezekiel 27, but that list is organized by country of origin, emphasizing “all nations.”

It is ironic that the kings lead the mourning. First they “commit fornication with her” as her lovers. Then they hate her and destroy her (Rev 17:16). Finally they recall the pleasures she gave them, and lament as though they had never turned against her.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
9a And the kings of the earth , who have committed fornication and lived deliciously ⁴⁰ with her,	15a The merchants of these things , which were made rich by her,	17b And every shipmaster , and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea,

The first element in the alternation explains how each group benefited from her (chart). The kings were seduced by her, the merchants profited by selling the goods that she demanded, and since many of these goods came from abroad, the shipping trade was dependent on her.

³⁹ In addition to the references below, recall the parable of the foolish farmer in Luk 12:16-21.

⁴⁰ The same verb used of Babylon in 18:7, the only two places it occurs in the Greek Bible

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
10a Standing afar off for the fear of her torment,	15b shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, ...	17c stood afar off, ...

Once they competed to be close to her and enjoy her favors. Now they stand afar off.⁴¹ In two of the three cases we are told the reason: they fear that her judgment might overtake them.

It is natural to association with one who is being judged, so as not to be condemned with them. David experienced it when God chastised him, perhaps after his sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 38:11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand **afar off**.

When our Lord was crucified, his followers initially stood afar off.

Mat 27:55 And many women were there beholding **afar off**, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Mrk 15:40 There were also women looking on **afar off**: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Luk 23:49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood **afar off**, beholding these things.

Like Peter, they were probably afraid of being too closely associated with a condemned man. They were “in fear of his torment,” fearful that his enemies might come after them next. But in our Lord’s case, some later drew near enough to converse with the Lord:

Jhn 19:25 Now there stood **by the cross** of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, **he saith** unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

This is a fundamental decision we must make with respect to the one whom the world has rejected and condemned. It may be safer for us if we stand “afar off” to avoid sharing in the world’s hatred for him. But the Scriptures exhort us to

Heb 13:13 ... go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
9b shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,	15c ... weeping and wailing,	... 18a And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, ... 19a And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing

All three panels emphasize the expressions of lament from the mourners. In two of the three cases, we are reminded of “the smoke of her burning” from 17:16.

41 “Afar off” μακρόθεν G3113 appears in the NT only in the synoptics and here. More than half of the synoptic uses (6/11x) describe the reticence of Peter (in the palace of the high priest) and the women at the cross to associate too closely with the Lord. John may be trying deliberately to draw our attention to our need to identify with the sufferings of our substitute.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
10b saying, Alas, alas,	16a And saying, Alas, alas,	19b And they ... cried, ... saying, Alas, alas,

This is the second cluster of the cry “Alas” or “Woe” (οὐαὶ *ouai* G3759) in the book (Figure 13). The first cluster introduced the last three trumpets:

Rev 8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, **Woe, woe, woe**, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

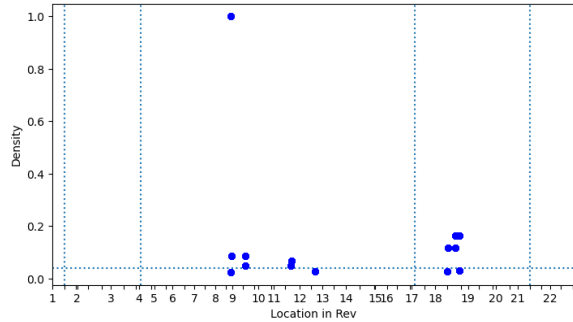


Figure 13: “Alas” or “woe” οὐαὶ ouai G3759 in the Revelation

When we studied that passage, we learned that this cry is a common OT funeral lamentation:

1Kings 13:30 And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, **Alas**, my brother!

Jer. 22:18 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, **Ah** my brother! or, **Ah** sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, **Ah** lord! or, **Ah** his glory! 19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

The use of this cry confirms that this passage describes Babylon’s funeral.⁴²

Recall that the seals, trumpets, and bowls each extend to the final coming of God’s kingdom. The reappearance of this cry here emphasizes that we are now witnessing that final unfolding.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
10c that great city Babylon, ...	16b that great city ,	18b ... saying, What city is like unto this great city! ... 19c ... that great city ,

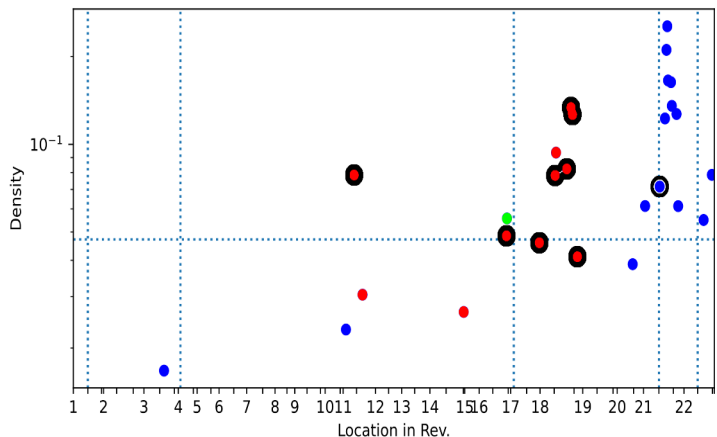


Figure 14: City πόλις G4172 in Revelation. Red: Babylon; Blue: Jerusalem; Green: cities of the nations. Black border: “Great”

All three groups remember Babylon as “that great city,” the title that has distinguished her throughout the book (chart). Figure 14 (chart) shows the distribution of “city” in the book. Red dots refer to “Babylon,” and eight of them⁴³ are modified by “great” (shown by a black border). Four of those eight are in 18:10-19, mourning her fall, when she is humbled so severely that everyone stands afar off from her. The world’s greatness

42 Revelation uses the word most densely (14x, 1.41/1000 words) of any book with more than one occurrence. Jude and 1 Corinthians use it once each, but the other 31 instances are all in the synoptics, and all spoken by the Lord Jesus to those who either oppose him, or are in danger of death for other reasons.
 43 Rev. 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18-19 (all ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη), 21 (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις).

passes way. But notice the blue dots, which refer to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Lord promised the church in Philadelphia,

Rev. 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of **the city of my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

The final instance of the term “great city” refers, not to Babylon, but to Jerusalem:

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me **that great city**, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

In the end, the “great city” set up by human effort is destroyed, and God’s city emerges supreme.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
10d ... that mighty city!	16c that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!	19c wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!

Each mourner reflects on what made her great. The kings naturally recall her physical power,⁴⁴ while the merchants remember her beautiful attire (purchased from them), and the seamen recall the wealth she brought to them to acquire her delicacies.

Kings	Merchants	Seamen
10e for in one hour is thy judgment come.	17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.	19d for in one hour is she made desolate.

In the final parallel, all three groups observe how quickly her doom comes upon her. 18:8 said that her plagues would come “in one day.” In fact, it only takes one hour to bring her to nothing.

Here, as in the former parallel, each lament is appropriate to the speaker.

- Kings, who have the duty of rendering judgment, see it as a judgment.
- Merchants lament over the loss of riches.
- Seamen, accustomed to connecting the world together, focus on her loneliness.

20-24, More Heavenly Speech

The chapter concludes with a final commandment and doom, each with reasons, as in 18:1-8. The speaker is not identified, suggesting we continue to hear the heavenly voice of 18:4-8.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets;—Here is the second and last command section. After leaving Babylon (v. 4) and punishing her (vv. 6-7), we are to rejoice over her.

for God hath avenged you on her.—As in the other doom and command blocks, we are given a reason. Here it is: God’s judgment on his wicked adversaries. “Avenge” suggests an answer to the plea of the martyrs for vengeance in the fifth seal (chart):

44 ισχυρός G2478, emphasizing physical strength, as opposed to authority ἐξουσία G1849 or dominion κράτος G2904. See notes on 5:12 for more detail.

Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not **judge** and **avenge** our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

The link is correct to 6:10, but the translation is imprecise. The verb “avenge” ἐκδικέω *ekdikeō* G1556 does not occur here, but (in the Revelation) only in 6:10, and again in 19:2,

Rev 19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath **judged** the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath **avenged** the blood of his servants at her hand.

The verb in 18:20 is κρίνω *krinō* G2919, “judge,” the other word used in 16:10 (and again in 19:2). The idiom here is interesting: “God has judged your judgment from her” (we might say “exacted your judgment”). Each term appears for the first time in 6:10, in the martyr’s prayer. When “avenge” returns in 19:2, it is again associated with “judge,” at the peak of that verb’s distribution (Figure 15). The intervening instances of κρίνω are 11:18 (the praise of the elders at the seventh trumpet), 16:5 (the third bowl), and 18:8 (Babylon’s plagues come in one day). So all the instances of κρίνω can be seen as responses to the martyrs’ prayer, leading to the climax in 19:2, of which we have the final details in 19:11 (the Lord returning on the white horse) and 20:12-13 (the judgment of the great white throne).

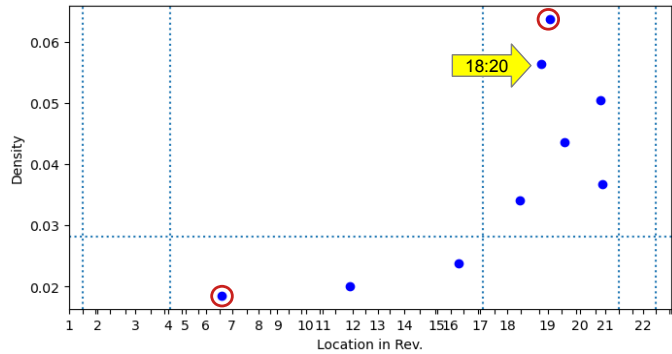


Figure 15: κρίνω *krinō* G2919 in the Revelation. Red circles mark the only two instances of ἐκδικέω *ekdikeō* G1556.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.—The final doom section uses the image of a destroyed city as a large stone cast into the water, another echo of Jeremiah’s judgments on ancient Babylon (chart).

Jer 51:60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, ... 63 ... when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt **bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:** 64 And thou shalt say, **Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise** from the evil that I will bring upon her:

But this judgment is more severe. Seraiah was simply to find a stone, big enough to drag a book underwater, and cast it into the Euphrates river. The mighty angel takes a “great millstone,” which might be as large as 3’ in diameter, and casts it into the ocean. And Babylon in Jeremiah simply sinks, but here she is “thrown down ... with violence.”

He goes on to describe the collapse of the society by referring to the cessation of the activities of daily life.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee;

and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee:— These judgments echo the Lord's words in Jeremiah 25, but with a striking twist:

Jer 25:9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10 Moreover **I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.** 11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that **I will punish the king of Babylon**, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

In Jeremiah, these judgments describe what Babylon brings on Israel. But in Revelation, they describe what falls upon Babylon. Jeremiah had predicted that Babylon would finally be judged. The heavenly voice commanded us in Rev 18:6, “Reward her as she has rewarded,” and here that reciprocal punishment is realized.

Now come three reasons for this doom (chart).

for thy merchants were the great men of the earth;—Babylon is condemned because “she hath glorified herself” (18:7), and the merchants who were made rich by her followed her example in throwing their weight around rather than glorifying the Lord. “Great men” *μεγιστάν megistan* G3175 appears only two other times in the NT, both emphasizing the political influence of those who bear the title:

Mark 6:21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his **lords**, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

Rev. 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the **great men**, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

Our own age offers ample examples of successful business leaders who glorify themselves.

for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.—We return to one of the defining characteristics of the great whore, her idolatry, with its link to demons.

The mighty angel gives a third reason, though without the conjunction “for,” and shifting from second person (addressing Babylon directly) to third person (addressing all those who hear him).

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.—This matches the description in Revelation 17,

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

As in 18:20, we are reminded of the prayer of the martyrs in 6:10, which God, his longsuffering finally exhausted, is now granting. A parent will sometimes demand a child's obedience within a time period: “I'm going to count to three.” If, when the time period is ended, the child has not obeyed, a wise parent will bring judgment. So God has been patiently waiting, but he tells us here that there is a limit to his longsuffering, and judgment will fall.

19:1-10, Praise to Babylon's Conqueror

We have studied Babylon's relation first to the beast (chapter 17), and then to those who comment on her demise (chapter 18). These verses praise God for conquering her.

Like chapter 18, this section is divided by changes in speaker (chart):

19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of **much people in heaven, saying**,

19:4 And **the four and twenty elders and the four beasts** fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, **saying**,

19:5 And **a voice came out of the throne, saying**,

19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of **a great multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, **saying**,

19:9 And he **saith** unto me,

John overhears the first four speakers. The fifth speaker, who addresses him directly, is the angel who has been guiding John since 17:1.

Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

19:9-10 is the first time he has directly addressed John since then, and closes an inclusio, marking off this section.

The first four voices do not address John directly. He overhears them praising God. The first four voices all use either the Hebrew word "Alleluia" (19:1, 3, 4, 6) or a close paraphrase of it in Greek, "praise our God" (19:5).

We'll begin by considering this distinctive word of praise, and then look at what each voice says.

Alleluia

This is a transliteration of the Greek word ἀλληλουῖα *allēlouia* G239, which in turn is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה, an exhortation meaning "praise ye the Lord." Other than two references in the apocrypha (Tob 13:18 and 2Mac 7:13), the LXX contains this word only in the latter part of Psalms (Figure 16).

The book of Psalms has five parts, or books, each closing with praise to the Lord, and each with characteristic

vocabulary and themes.⁴⁵ Robertson⁴⁶ shows that the final editor of the Psalter (after the Babylonian captivity) organized these successive books around five themes:

- Book 1, Pss 1-41: **Confrontation** between the Messianic king and his opposition.

45 For full discussion, see https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Ps_5Books14.pdf.

46 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015.

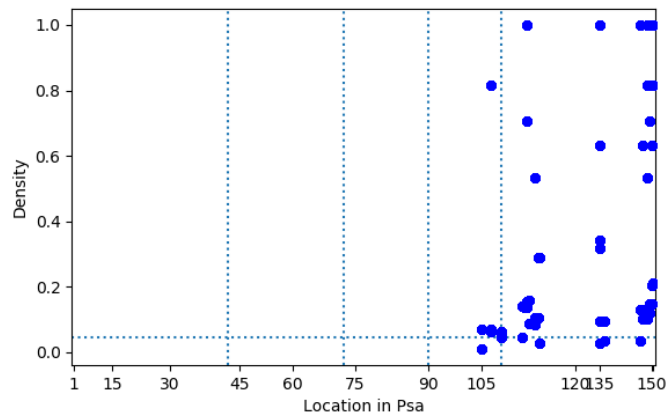


Figure 16: *Hallelu-Jah (Praise ye the Lord) in the Psalms*

- Book 2, Pss 42-72: **Communication** of Messiah’s claims to the Gentiles
- Book 3, Pss 73-89: **Devastation** of God’s people by the Gentiles (culminating in the Babylonian captivity)
- Book 4, Pss 90-106: **Maturation** of hope in the Lord as king (during the captivity)
- Book 5, Pss 107-150: **Consummation** of the Messianic kingdom

The clustering of Alleluias at the end of book 4, and throughout book 5, praises God at the culmination of history, when all opposition to God’s rule has been overcome. This is exactly the setting in which John hears this cry of praise in Revelation 19.

The praise that John overhears is chiasmic. The first and fourth statements, which give reasons, are by a great multitude (= much people), while the second and third (which give no reasons) are by characters from chapter 5. These four utterances parallel what we heard in the throne room in chapter 5 (Table 5, chart). The parallel between the two chapters suggests that the judgment decreed in the scroll that appeared in Revelation 5 has now been executed.

Speaker	Revelation 5	Revelation 19
Saints	8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints .	1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven ...
24 Elders	9 And they [the elders] sung a new song , saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ...	4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.
Angels	11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.	
United Chorus	13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.	5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants , ... 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude , and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, ...

Table 5: Parallels between 5:8-13 and 19:1-5

1-3, Much People in Heaven

19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia;—“Much people” (ὄχλος πολὺς, *ochlos polus*, G3793 G4183) is literally “a great multitude.” The whore ruled over her “multitudes” (chart):

Rev 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and **multitudes**, and nations, and tongues.

But the Lord has a “great multitude” (19:1, 6), which we met first in 7:9:

Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a **great multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. ...

The Lamb’s multitude differs in two ways from hers: 1) it is larger, and 2) it is a unified body (singular, not plural). These have overcome the Antichrist and now enjoy the Lord’s presence.

We sometimes are not aware of the magnitude of God’s church, because he has not organized us like a human organization. In a hierarchy, you know your chain of command, and have some idea of the scope of the whole structure. The body of Christ is a distributed collection of local assemblies, each under local leaders, and each directly subject to the Holy Spirit. The Lord may do this so that our confidence is in him, and not in numbers. Recall the words of Jonathan to his armor bearer when the two of them went to challenge the entire camp of the Philistines:

1Sa 14:6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: **for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.**

David would later write,

Psa 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

King Asa faced an Ethiopian army twice the size of his own in this confidence:

2Ch 14:11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; **for we rest on thee**, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Our spiritual success does not depend on massing a large army, or dominating the electorate. Sometimes he keeps us small to emphasize that the victory is his, as when he deliberately cut Gideon’s army from 32,000 down to 300, to defeat the host of the Midianites, who were “as grasshoppers for multitude” (Jdg 6:5). Sometimes we may be discouraged at the fewness of the brothers and sisters whom we know, and feel like Elijah,

1Ki 19:14 ... I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and **I, even I only, am left**; and they seek my life, to take it away.

The Lord assured Elijah that there were many faithful saints, even in the apostate northern kingdom, though he could not see them:

1Ki 19:18 Yet I have left me **seven thousand in Israel**, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

John’s vision here should similarly encourage us. We may feel insignificant, compared with the crowds that gather at football games, or rock concerts, or before Saint Peter’s Cathedral in Rome for the feast days. But the Lord knows them that are his (2 Tim 2:19). He unites them, not hierarchically, but by his Spirit, and here he assures us that when he does gather them together, they will be “a great multitude.” Meanwhile, let us take every opportunity to visit and greet other assemblies, encouraging one another with the great multitude of which we are a part.

Rev 17:1-19:10, Rise and Fall of the Great Whore

(Speaker)	1:6 John	4:9, Living Creatures	4:10-11, Elders	5:9-10, Elders: The slain Lamb is worthy ...	5:12, Angel Host	5:13, All Creation	7:10, Much People	7:11-12, Angels, Elders, LCs	11:15, Loud Voices in Heaven	12:10 Loud Voice in Heaven	19:1 Much People in Heaven
(Recipient)	Jesus Christ	God	God		Lamb	God & Lamb	God & Lamb	God	God & his Christ	God & his Christ	Lord our God
(Form)	to ...	to ...	Worthy		Worthy	to ...	to ...	to ...	Now is come	Now is come	Alleluiah ; to ...
Glory	1	1	1		6	3		2			2
Power κράτος G2904	2					4					
Honor		2	2		5	2		5			3
Thanks		3						4			
Power δύναμις G1411			3		1			6		2	4
Riches					2						
Wisdom					3			3			
Strength, might ἰσχύς G2479					4			7			
Blessing					7	1		1			
Salvation							1			1	1
Kingdom									1	3	
Power ἐξουσία G1849									4		
(Response)	Amen				Amen	Amen →	Amen				

Table 6: Doxologies in the Revelation

Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:—As in 7:9, the multitude utters a doxology, the last of the eleven that we find in the Revelation (Table 6, chart).

The rows show the order in which the twelve features are introduced, which parallels the progress of the book.

- The first two appear in John’s praise to the Lord Jesus at the opening of the book. These are common already in the epistles (1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 1:25; Col. 1:11).
- The next eight are introduced in the throne room, before the sealed scroll begins to be opened. As with Job, the vision of God greatly enlarges the scope of John’s understanding.
- Next is Salvation, ascribed by the great multitude in heaven in 7:10, who have come “out of great tribulation” (7:14), apparently through martyrdom. To the world, death appears to be defeat, but for believers, it is deliverance from the world.
- Then 11:15, the seventh trumpet, brings us down to the final culmination, when the kingdom is ascribed to God for the first time.
- Finally, in 12:10, when Satan is cast out of heaven, we hear of the Lord’s authority to rule.

The most similar of the other doxologies is 4:10-11, that of the elders in heaven. Three of the four features are the same, and they appear in the same order. But that scene happens earlier, while the scroll is yet unopened. Now all of its judgments have been released, God has delivered his people, and they joyfully begin by acknowledging God’s Salvation.

2 For true and righteous are his judgments:—These two terms⁴⁷ appear together in the Greek Bible for the first time in a commercial law, in Deuteronomy (chart):

Deut. 25:13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. 14 Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. 15 But thou shalt have **a perfect ἀληθινός *alēthinos* and just δίκαιος *dikaios* weight, a perfect and just measure** shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Dishonest people might use a light shekel to weigh the produce that they delivered, and a heavy one to weigh the silver that the buyer paid, but the Lord forbids this. The merchant is to have a single set of weights and measures, whether he is buying or selling. It must be both perfect (complete, not 15 ounces instead of a full pound) and just (meeting community standards).

The LXX translates “perfect and just” as “true and righteous,” as in our verse. God’s judgments are just (consistent with his law), and also true (complete, in full measure, not too much or too little). In fact, later Moses uses these terms to describe God himself:

Deut. 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is **perfect ἀληθινός**: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, **just δίκαιος** and right ὀσιος is he.

Rev 19:2 is the third time that the Revelation describes God this way. In Revelation 15, just before the bowls are poured out, those who have overcome the beast characterize the coming judgments this way:

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; **just and true** are thy ways, thou King of saints.

And after the third bowl, an angel proclaims,

Rev 16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, **true and righteous** are thy judgments.

The point is that when God’s judgments come, they are both just (consistent with his law and character) and complete (in full measure, leaving no sin unpunished).

for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.—Ἐκδικέω *ekdikeō* G1556 appears in the Revelation only here and in 6:10. As in 6:10, it is associated with κρίνω *krinō* G2919. In 6:10 we had not yet learned of the beast or Babylon, but we know from 2 Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity has been working throughout this present age, and Revelation 17-19 confirm that this spirit motivated the martyrdoms of 6:10.

3 And again they said, Alleluia.—They both begin and end their comments with Alleluia (like Psalms 106, 113, 135, 146-150)

And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.—Once more, we are reminded of her shameful end.

4, Elders and Living Creatures

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.—In 5:9-12, these two groups agree that the Lamb is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals.

47 ἀληθινός *alēthinos* G228 and just δίκαιος *dikaios* G1342 See note for the use of ἀληθινός to mean complete.

Rev 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, **Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb** for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, **Amen**. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Now that the scroll’s judgments are complete, they worship God for bringing his plan to fulfillment. As in chapter 5, the angels, without direct personal knowledge of salvation, must acknowledge the insight to which the saints bear the initial and primary witness.

5, The Voice from the Throne

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God⁴⁸, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.—The third voice comes directly from the throne. Unlike the others, it does not offer an Alleluia, but instead commands everyone to “praise our God.” Recall that in Hebrew, “alleluia” means “praise ye the Lord.” This command translates the Hebrew, encouraging others to join into the praise that has already been uttered.

Who is speaking? Throughout the Revelation (Figure 17, chart), we read of entities being *before the throne* (sea of glass 4:6; crowns of the elders 4:10; seven spirits 7:3; a multitude 7:9; angels 7:11, etc.) or *round about the throne* (a rainbow 4:3; the thrones of the elders 4:4, the living creatures 4:6; many angels 5:11; 7:11). But the only ones we ever see *in* the throne are God, and the Lord Jesus:

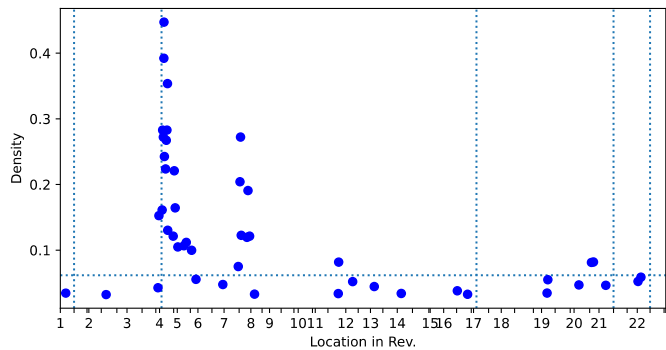


Figure 17: Throne θρόνος thronos G2362 in the Revelation

Rev. 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father **in his throne**.

At the end of the book, it is called “the throne of God, and of the Lamb”:

Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of **the throne of God and of the Lamb**. ... 3 And there shall be no more curse: but **the throne of God and of the Lamb** shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

This voice comes “out from the throne,” so it is either the Father or the Son. It refers to “our God,” an expression unparalleled in the utterances of the Father, but familiar from our Lord Jesus, who more than once refers to the Father as his God:

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, ... go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to **my God**, and your God.

48 αἰνέω is the common translation for הלל throughout the LXX, and in Ps 135:3 LXX translates הללו־יהוָה as αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον. In Psalms 148 and 150, the succeeding instances of הלל are all αἰνέω.

Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of **my God**, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of **my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from **my God**: and I will write upon him my new name.

The voice we hear is probably our Savior, exhorting all creation to join in praise of God. This may be why he changes the “Lord” implicit in alleluia (“praise ye the Lord”) to “our God.” He himself bears the title of Lord, but he wants to focus attention on his Father, and so takes his place with his people and encourages them to worship.

Along with the alleluias, his action offers another striking parallel with the Psalms. Fifty-five times throughout the Psalter (and in Hab 3:19), sacred songs are dedicated to someone called “the chief musician” (Figure 18, chart). For example, the first instance concludes the third Psalm:

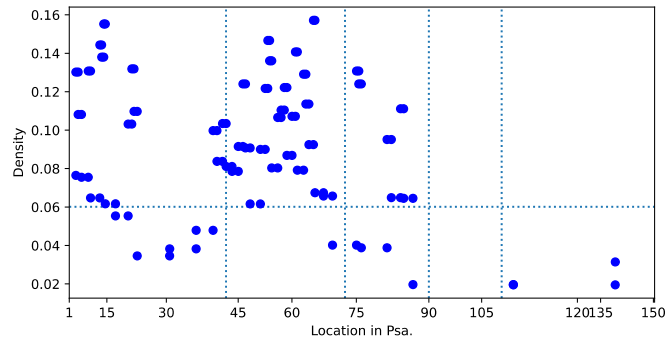


Figure 18: The Chief Musician in the Psalms

Psa. 3:0 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. 1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

... 8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah. 4:0 **To the chief Musician on Neginoth,**

Note that the dedication belongs to the end of this Psalm, not the start of the next.⁴⁹ Many of these Psalms are cries for help, and David wants the congregation to follow his example in calling on the Lord, as well as in praising him.

Psalms are dedicated to the Chief Musician in books 1-3 and 5, which envision Israel in the land, but none in book 4, which describes the maturation of Israel’s faith in captivity, where there was neither tabernacle nor temple. The term apparently describes the leader of musical worship in the temple, and there was no temple during the captivity.

Like many other characters in the OT, this sacred song leader may be a foreshadowing of our Savior. Often in the Psalms, the singer in his sufferings is a type of Christ, and frequently promises to lead the congregation in praise when God has delivered him. We recognize Psalm 22 as predicting our Lord’s sufferings, from references like 22:16 “pierced hands and feet” and 22:18 “part my garments.” Note how his promise to praise the Lord (blue) leads to praise from his people (red):

Psa 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: **in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.** 23 Ye that fear the LORD, **praise him;**⁵⁰ all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. ... 25 **My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation:** I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: **they shall praise**⁵¹ the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. 27 All

49 We should keep in mind Thirtle’s argument, based on Habakkuk 3 and Isa 38:20, that these dedications, which appear at the start of individual Psalms in our version, really belong to the end of the previous psalms. See notes on Psalms for details.

50 This is the first instance of the imperative of הלל *halal* H1984 in the Psalter, and the only one earlier than the end of the fourth book of the Psalms (Ps 104:35).

51 Again, הלל *halal* H1984, but now indicative.

the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and **all the kindreds of the nations shall worship** before thee.

Ps 34:20, “he keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken,” is quoted of our Lord in John 19:36, and in that Psalm we see the same pattern:

Psa 34:1 **I will bless the LORD** at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3 **O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.** 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

When we gather to worship, we are living stones, forming a holy temple unto the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph 2:21-22). Our Savior is in our midst, the chief musician, leading our praise. He thanks the Father for delivering him from death (Psa 22:24), and when the Father delivered him from death, he brought us out with him. So in Rev 19:5, the Lord Jesus as the chief musician encourages all of creation to join in the Alleluias with him, and the next three verses record their obedience to his exhortation.

6-8, Great Multitude Again

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, —The reference to “a great multitude” takes us back to the initial chorus in 19:1. This description is supplemented with two others that appear to refer to the same group.⁵²

Table 7 (chart) compares this text with chapters 7 and 14 to help us identify this group. The heavenly saints in 7:9, also described as “a great multitude,” were associated with an earthly Israelite army of 144,000 who were sealed. That army reappeared in 14:1, standing on Mount Sion (a glimpse of the earthly millennium), and again we see a heavenly multitude, whose voice is described as

“many waters ... a great thunder.” Our passage combines the three terms used in 7:9 and 14:2 to describe this company. **and as the voice of many waters,** —“Many waters” is a common description in the OT for the

	Rev 7	Rev 14	Rev 19
On Earth	4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.	1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand , having his Father's name written in their foreheads.	
In Heaven	9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude , which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne,	2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne,	6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude , and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Table 7: Identifying the triple voice in 19:6

⁵² The parallel with 5:13 suggests that this chorus should encompass all creation, but the three descriptive terms here all appear to refer to humans. Something to think about ...

Mediterranean (see note), whose stormy waves were an object of fear by Israel. The sound of this multitude is like that of a raging storm, or even a tsunami, along the shore.

and as the voice of mighty thunderings,—Another example of great power is the thunderstorm. Thunderstorms in the levant, coming in off the Mediterranean, can be particularly violent. Their fearful power led to the worship of Baal, the thunder god, whose prophets hoped that he would send lightening to kindle their sacrifice on Mt. Carmel (1Kings 18).

The association of the two images recalls Psalm 29 (chart):

Psa 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory **thundereth**: the LORD is upon **many waters**. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

When the Lord comes in judgment, he is like the crashing waves and rolling thunder of a Mediterranean storm. His saints, now triumphant, echo that sound.

Like the first voice of the multitude, and unlike the intermediary two voices from the elders, the living creatures, and the throne, this voice is associated with reasons for the praise. The multitude has two things to say, each with its reason: the Alleluia that we expect from the parallel with the other three voices, and a resolve to rejoice.

saying, Alleluia:—They begin with the characteristic exhortation to others to praise the Lord.

for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.—The reason centers around a title for God, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, that appears five other times in the book (Rev. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22). In the LXX, it is characteristic of the prophet Amos,⁵³ who uses it to emphasize the sovereignty of God in creation:

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, **The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.**

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith **the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.** [The Hebrew groups the title as in 4:13.]

Thus this title parallels and generalizes the reason given in 19:1-3, that the great whore has been judged. As in those verses, God's people rejoice because he has demonstrated his holiness in judging sin.

The plural “hosts” in the OT refers to the people of God, not the “host of heaven” (always singular), and here as well we can often see the emphasis on God's relation with his people. Four of these six instances (all but 4:8 and 21:11) are uttered by his people. Note the parallelism,

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, **Lord God Almighty**; just and true are thy ways, thou **King of saints.**

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him:—The second utterance by the multitude is not a command, but a resolve on their part, to do three things.

53 See note, which also discusses the significance of the majority reading, “The Lord our God, the Almighty,” as an allusion to 1:8 and Exod 6:3.

First, they will “be glad,” in a state of happiness. The focus here is on their internal attitude. The best antidepressant is recognizing God’s blessings to us, and his promise of ultimate victory.

Next, they will “rejoice,” giving voice to their happiness. We should follow the example of our chief musician and give thanks in the congregation of the saints.

Finally, their focus should not remain on their own joy, but on the One who has made it possible by his victory over sin. We have three reasons for their joy.

for the marriage of the Lamb is come,—The first reason for their joy is that the harlotry of Babylon will be replaced by the marriage of the church with her heavenly bridegroom.

The metaphor here rests on many earlier scriptures, which we can place in three groups.

1. Descriptions of the relation of God and his people as a marriage.
2. Psalm 45, description of a specific royal wedding
3. Matthew 22, description of the feast that accompanies a wedding.

These passages and others (Matt 9:15; Matthew 25) imply a network of individuals (Figure 19, chart). The dashed lines show the characters involved in each of the three scenarios outlined above. One character is common to them all: the groom or husband. We also appear in all of them, but variously as the bride, the later guests, the friends of the bridegroom, and the bridesmaids.

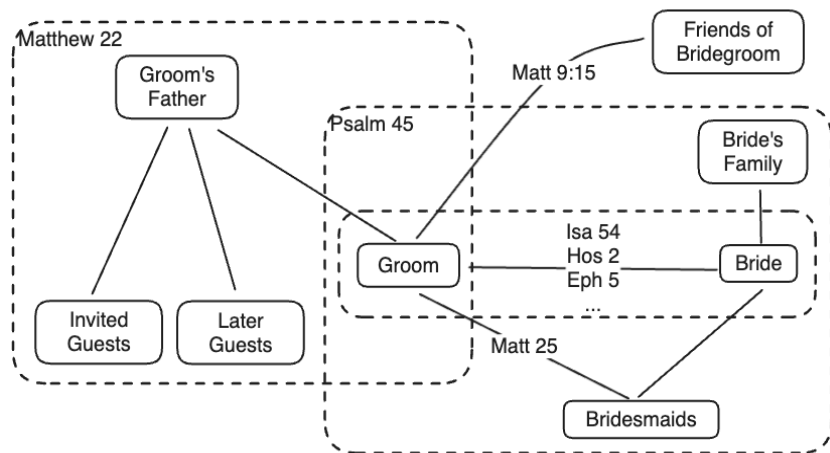


Figure 19: Characters in a Biblical Wedding

Consider first the relation between the bride and the groom (group 1, inner box on right). This imagery is the culmination of a metaphor for the relation between God and his people that pervades Scripture. In the OT, Israel is the wife of Jehovah (chart):

Isa 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Hos 2:19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

As we have noted, her idolatry constitutes adultery against her husband.

The image continues into the New Testament:

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

and his wife hath made herself ready.—The second reason is that his bride has prepared herself.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.—The third reason is that she is given a special wedding garment.

This description of the bride would naturally draw the mind of a Jewish reader to Psalm 45, the second of the three inspirations for our passage, represented by the large dashed box on the right of Figure 19. This Psalm, written by the sons of Korah, is in book 2, which focuses on the Communication of Messiah’s claims to the Gentiles. It describes the wedding of the Messianic king, establishing his dynasty over the entire earth.

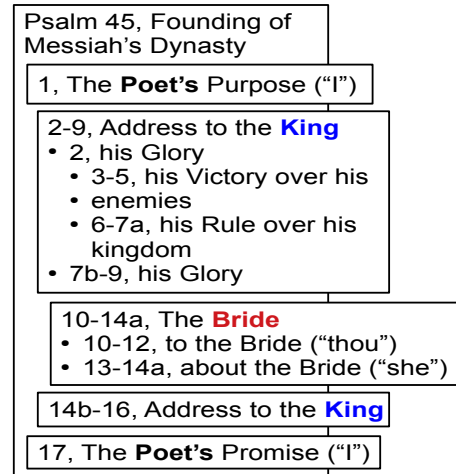


Figure 20: Structure of Psalm 45

Figure 20 shows the structure of this Psalm (chart). The poet first speaks to the king, celebrating his victory over his enemies and the establishment of his kingdom (vv. 2-9). Then he turns to the bride, who is to be joined to the king (10-14a), and finally promises the king an abundant progeny (14b-15), the hope of any marriage.

Secular scholars view this Psalm as written for the wedding of one of Israel’s kings to a foreign princess—perhaps Solomon to an Egyptian princess, or Ahab to Jezebel, the princess of Tyre. But verse 6 addresses the king as “God”:

Psa 45:6 Thy throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever:

The Psalmist exhorts the bride concerning her royal bridegroom,

Ps 45:11 He is thy **Lord (pl)**, and worship thou him.

The word “Lord” here is the plural אֲדֹנָי, which is the term used to avoid pronouncing the sacred name, and refers to Jehovah. Like 45:6, it shows that the groom is divine.

Heb 1:8-9 cites vv. 6-7 as describing the Messiah:

Heb 1:8 But **unto the Son** he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

This messianic interpretation goes back to the Jews. The Aramaic Targum, a Jewish rendering used in synagogues, paraphrases v. 2,

Psa 45:2 Your beauty, **O King Messiah**, is greater than the sons of men; the spirit of prophecy has been placed on your lips; because of this the LORD has blessed you forever.

And when v. 10 addresses the bride, the Targum interprets it of the nation, harkening to the divine lawgiver:

Psa 45:11 Hear, **O congregation of Israel**, the Torah of his mouth, and see the wonders of his deeds, and incline your ear to the words of Torah, and you will forget the evil deeds of the wicked of your people, and the place of idols that you worshipped in the house of your father. 12 And then the king will desire your beauty; for he is your master and you will bow down to him.

The Psalm fits perfectly into the chronology of Revelation 19. The great whore has been destroyed, the Son of God is about to ride down from heaven to defeat the beast and his armies, and the Psalmist declares,

Psa 45:3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Then we progress to Revelation 20, where Satan's destruction is delayed for a thousand years when the Lord rules with his people, and the Psalmist anticipates this righteous rule:

Psa 45:6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. ...

Rev 19:7 tells us that "his bride has made herself ready," and the Psalmist exhorts the bride,

Psa 45:10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

She is a foreign bride, just as we are, formerly under Satan's power. But just as we read (Rev 19:7) that his wife hath made herself ready, this bride is to prepare herself for her union with the king, in two ways. The first instruction is negative:

Psa 45:10 forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;—To come to Christ, we must first *repent*, abandoning our loyalty to Satan's kingdom and our pursuit of the gaudy treasures he offers. Salvation must be *from* our old way of life, as well as *to* the Lord.

Psa 45:11 for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.—The second instruction is positive. The princess in the Psalm, and we, are to devote ourselves to worshipping our heavenly bridegroom.

The Psalm, like Rev 19:8, goes on to describe the bride's wedding garments:

Psa 45:13 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework:

The emphasis in the Psalm is in the richness of her garments—woven gold (intrinsically expensive), and detailed embroidery (requiring much careful labor). In Rev 19:8, her garments are also in focus, but the feature that marks them is their whiteness, depicting righteousness. This image has pervaded the book. The martyrs of 6:11 have been in view constantly, as God responds to their prayer for vengeance, and of them we read,

Rev 6:11 And **white robes were given unto every one of them** [the martyrs under the altar]; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

But what does this have to do with the Psalm's suggestion that her garment is costly, and carefully made? These attributes are also reflected in the Revelation. Its costliness is reflected in 7:14,

Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and **made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

And it requires much careful labor on our part as we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” under the Spirit’s guidance and enabling (Php 2:12).

Rev 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which **have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white:** for they are worthy.

9-10, Commentary by John’s Escort Angel

At this point, John no longer overhears other voices, but is addressed directly. Most likely, the speaker is the angelic guide who took charge of him at the start of chapter 17 (chart):

Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

The return of this character, who has probably been silent through chapters 17 and 18, marks this unity of this section.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.—We suggested three antecedents for the marriage metaphor: the general comparison of God’s relation to his people, the specific wedding of Psalm 45, and the picture of a marriage feast in Matthew 22 (left-hand box in Figure 19). The angel’s words here allude to this third inspiration.

Mat 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

One striking feature of this story is that the invited guests do not accept the precious invitation that they receive, so that the king must go out into the highways and byways to fill the table. The conclusion is,

Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

This section has already echoed this important truth in the prediction of the great final battle,

Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are **called, and chosen**, and faithful.

Not everyone who might be expected to have an interest in the marriage of the lamb, has rejoiced at its announcement. Only those who are faithful to him will end up at the table.

And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.—The angel exhorts John to take this invitation, and the terrible cost of rejecting it, seriously.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not:—Already in Paul’s writings, we see that paying reverence to angels was one form in which idolatry was creeping into the churches:

Col 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus:—We need to keep them in perspective. They are great and mighty beings, but they are fellowservants with us,

namely, of God. We are of equal rank in the court of heaven, and it is a serious error to bow down to them.⁵⁴

at the same time, their purpose is to serve us, not for us to serve them:

Heb 1:14 Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

worship God:—He alone is worthy of our worship.

for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.—The connection of this verse is obscure. Alford helpfully cites Vitranga, a seventeenth-century Dutch theologian,

The same Spirit who speaks and acts through those who preach the testimony of Christ, which the apostles did, is the same who speaks through me [the angel], who was sent by the Lord to make clear to you the things of the time to come. Therefore, your dignity is as great as mine, and so we are fellow-servants to offices not disparate in honor and degree called by the Lord.

This brings to an end the history of Babylon the great, and prepares us for the return of Christ in glory.

54 In the original presentation, I invoked the parallel of Heb 11:14, which declares agents to be servants to the saints. This is not the point of the angel here. He emphasizes that he is a fellowservant (that is, of God), in company with John and his associates.

Notes

17:9, The Seven Mountains

Two interpretations are offered for these mountains:

1. The seven hills of Rome, identifying the woman with papal Rome.
2. (Thomas, Johnson) seven kingdoms, aligned with the seven kings in v. 10.

The second reference gives a more integrated interpretation, with both images describing the same thing. But there are problems.

1. The best resolution for the seven kingdoms is Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the coming kingdom of antichrist. But the woman, the apostate people of God, did not sit on all of these.
2. In the original context in Daniel, the heads are Babylon, Persia, Greece (embodied in the four diadochi), and Rome. Thus the Revelation is already deviating from the original use of the image.

It seems best to understand the angel as offering different symbolic interpretations of the number seven.

The Vatican is outside the walls of Rome, and thus does not literally sit on the traditional seven hills. The sense of the expression “sit upon” κάθημαι ἐπί is probably the same as in v. 3, and as summarized in v. 18: she rules over the world-wide political power, which at John’s time was Rome.

17:15, Universal Lists

Compare with the summary lines in the table of nations, Genesis 10. At the end of each son’s list (Japheth, Ham, Shem), we have a summary, and then a final summary in v. 32. Table 8 shows the five terms used in these lists.

Gen. 10:5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Gen. 10:20 These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

Gen. 10:31 These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.

	tongue, לשון, H3956, γλῶσσα	family, משפחה, H4940, φυλή	generation, תולדות, H4835, γένεσις	land, אָרץ, H776, χώρα,	nation, גוי, H1471, ἔθνος
Japheth, 5	1	2			3
Ham, 20	2	1		3	4
Shem, 31	2	1		3	4
Summary, 32		1	2		3
Revelation	7x	5x			7x

Table 8: Universal Lists in Genesis 10, The Table of Nations

Gen. 10:32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

Three of these terms are used in the lists in the Revelation. The two that are not are generation and land. The omissions are reasonable. Both of these themes (how a family developed through time, and what territory it occupied) are central concerns in Genesis 10, but not in the statements of universality in the Revelation.

The lists in the Revelation include three terms that are not used here. What might be the significance of this omission?

- λαός G2992 People. the underlying Hebrew term עַם H5971 emphasizes an ethnic unit, while ἔθνος גוֹ has political overtones. עַם appears for the first time in Genesis in Gen 11:6, indicating that the entire population of the world was at this time a single עַם, so that it would make no sense to describe different “peoples” in ch. 10.
- βασιλεύς G935 King. Again, these emerge later in Genesis. “King” appears for the first time in Gen 14, and 10:10 reports only the single kingdom of Nimrod.
- ὄχλος G3793 Multitude, is not used in the LXX before Numbers.

“Multitude” in the LXX

ὄχλος ochlos G3793 appears only 49x in the LXX, contrasted with 174x in the NT, though the LXX (Accordance) has 587,477 words compared with 140,155 in the NT. It is neither dominant nor dedicated for any Hebrew word (Table 9). The table also shows correspondents for another Greek word translated “multitude,” πλῆθος *plēthos* G4128, and a related adjective. πολὺς *polus* G4183, usually translated “much.” The Hebrew precursors for πλῆθος emphasize the large numbers of people involved, while the most common Hebrew terms translated ὄχλος emphasize the assembling (of a congregation or army) for a specific purpose. As is often the case, the more common term has the more general meaning, while the rarer one specializes it semantically.

	קהל	חיל	המון	עם	רב	גדול		Total
ὄχλος	6	5	2	2	0	0		49
πλῆθος	2	0	25	1	95	0		281
πολύς	1	0	2	0	39	10		865
Total	123	245	87	1868	152	527		

Table 9: LXX Correspondences for words for “multitude.” (πολύς includes many variations on רב that are not counted here.)

In the LXX, ὄχλος is most common in Daniel (7x). Setting side the first (3:4) and last (11:43), the other five all describe the war of the kings of the north and south:

Dan. 11:8 Yea, he shall carry with a **body of captives** into Egypt their gods with their molten images, and all their precious vessels of silver and gold; and he shall last longer than the king of the north.

Dan. 11:10 And his sons shall gather a **multitude** among many: and one shall certainly come and overflow, and pass through, and he shall rest, and collect his strength.

Dan. 11:13 For the king of the north shall return, and bring a **multitude** greater than the former, and at the end of the times of years an invading army shall come with a great force, and with much substance.

Dan. 11:25 And his strength and his heart shall be stirred up against the king of the south with a great **force**; and the king of the south shall engage in war with a great and very strong **force**; but his forces shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him.

What is the chronology of Daniel with respect to the end times? Wood sees the antichrist starting at 11:36. So these all have to do with the conflict between the Selucids and the Ptolemies. The last falls within the history of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Mounce finds

the alteration of one member in 10:11 and 17:15 is inconsequential⁵⁵

But this is giving up too easily (though at least he mentions the difference, which is more than other commentators do). The case of ὄχλος particularly demands attention, since (unlike the others) it is not linked to ethnic or political distinctions.

Bauckham⁵⁶ (p. 331f) does engage these differences.

But on this occasion another term, ὄχλος, is substituted for the usual φυλή: λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι εἰσὶν καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι. Here **the first two terms are set apart from the latter two.** Elsewhere in the vision of Babylon, ἔθνος is used for the nations over which she rules (18:3, 23; cf. 14:8; 16:19), but **λαός and ὄχλος are used for the people of God:** ‘my people’ (ὁ λαός μου), who are called to come out of Babylon (18:4), and the ‘great multitude’ (ὄχλος πολύς), who are the martyred Christians in heaven rejoicing over Babylon’s fall (19:1, 6; cf. 7:9). Moreover, when the voice of the great multitude is said to be ‘like the sound of many waters’ (19:6; cf. 14:2), we are reminded that the fourfold phrase is used in 17:15 to explain the meaning of the ‘many waters’ (17:2) on which Babylon sits. Thus by placing λαός first in the fourfold formula and uniquely including ὄχλος, John has highlighted, in this form of the fourfold phrase, **the contrast between the nations who serve Babylon and the people of God who suffer at her hands** (17:6; 18:20, 24).

This is a helpful insight, though I have preferred to contrast the simple plural of the whore’s “multitudes” with the superlative singular of the Lamb’s “great multitude.”

See Trench, xcvi:

The Greek δῆμος is the Latin ‘populus,’ which Cicero (De Re Publ. 25; cf. Augustine, De Civ. Dei, ii. 2 1) thus defines: ‘Populus autem non omnis hominum coetus quoquo modo congregatus, sed coetus multitudinis juris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus;’⁵⁷ ‘die Gemeinde,’ the free commonalty (Plutarch, Mul. Virt. 15, in fine), and these very often contemplated as assembled in an actual exercise of their rights as citizens. This idea indeed so dominates the word that τῷ δήμῳ) is equivalent to, ‘in a popular assembly.’ It is invariably thus used by St. Luke. If we want the exact opposite to δῆμος it is ὄχλος, the disorganized, or rather the unorganized, multitude (Luke ix. 38; Matt. xxi. 8; [Page 369] Acts xiv. 14); this word in classic Greek having often a certain tinge of contempt, as designating those who share neither in the duties nor privileges of the free citizens;

55 Mounce, R. H. (1997). *The Book of Revelation*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (p. 320, note 59).

56 Bauckham, R. (1993). *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (pp. 331–332). T&T Clark: A Continuum Imprint.

57 “Now the people is not every group of men gathered together in any way, but a group of multitudes united by the consent of the law and the common interest”

ἀποδίδωμι G591 in 18:6 (Table 10)

	שוב	מכר	נתן	פקד	שלם	נרף	גמל		Total
ἀποδίδωμι	54	40	19	3	23	3	0		206
πιπράσκω		22							32
ἀνταποδίδωμι	17	0	0	1	26	0	13		87
Total	1074	80	2014	304	116	34	37		

Table 10: LXX mappings for ἀποδίδωμι and related terms

The three instances of פקד all have God as subject, and all refer to the classic formula for visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children:

Ex. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Num. 14:18 The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Deut. 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,

The four other instances of פקד עון use different verbs: ἐπάγω (Ex 34:7; Isa 26:21), ἀνταποδίδωμι (Lev 18:25), ἐπισκέπτομαι (Lam 4:22).

The most dedicated Hebrew verb is מכר, with its commercial overtones of selling. “Sell her as she has sold you”?

See Mounce dictionary, and Vine *s.v.* Render. Giving something back.

Beckwith has excellent parallels:

Jer 50:14 Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD. 15 ... **as she hath done, do unto her.**

Jer. 50:29 Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: **recompense ἀνταποδίδωμι her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her:** for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

Jer 51:24 And I will **render ἀνταποδίδωμι** unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

Jer. 51:56 Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of **recompences** shall surely **requite.**

But what has Babylon given back to others? The best parallel here is:

Psa. 137:8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth **ἀνταποδίδωμι** thee as thou hast served **ἀνταποδίδωμι** us.

How did Babylon “repay” Israel? She was God’s instrument of chastisement and purification. Compare God’s discussion of Assyria in Isaiah 10.

Isa 10:5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. ... 13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: ... 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? ... 16 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

The idea is that God has used Assyria to repay the wicked for their sin, and now he repays her. So in Psalm 137, God used Babylon to repay Judah for her sins, and he now repays her; and in Rev 18:6 the same pattern applies. We should drop “you,” with the MT, while recognizing that the saints are likely the avenging force in view.

The latter verb here is **למג**, an excellent Hebrew verb for “repay,” but nowhere used for **ἀποδίδωμι**. But **ἀνταποδίδωμι** appears only 7x in the NT, only in Luke and Paul (and Hebrews), never in John, while **ἀποδίδωμι** appears 47x, four of them in the Revelation, also in Matthew, Peter, and Mark (who all might be expected to be less comfortable in Greek, like John).

What are the other instances in Revelation?

Rev. 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and **yielded** her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Rev. 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my **reward** is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

The Relation of 18:11-14 to Ezekiel 27

Ezekiel 27 mourns the fall of Tyre, described as “a merchant of the people” (27:3), and includes a list of the different nations who traded in Tyre and the commodities in which they dealt. The list of commodities has invited comparison with Rev 18:11-14, and many items are named in both lists (Table 16, in two columns at the end of the notes). But it is important to note that while Ezekiel 27 mourns the destruction of the merchant, in Revelation 18 the merchant is mourning the loss of its customers, among whom Babylon is apparently prominent. In addition, Tyre is organized geographically, while Revelation 18 is by category (Bauckham).

One group that mourns for the merchant in Ezekiel 27 also mourns for the customer in Revelation 18: the sailors.

Ezk 27:29 And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; 30 And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall

wallow themselves in the ashes: 31 And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

The Chariots of Rev 18:13

The Greek word used in 18:13 does not appear in the LXX OT. It describes a wagon, not a war chariot.

	מרכבה H4818	רכב N H7393	עגלה H5699	Total
ῥέδη G4480				0
ἄρμα G716	42	95		170
ἄμαξα G261.1		0	22	27
Total	44	120	25	

Table 11: The "chariots" of 18:13

ἀληθινός alēthinos G228

In Deut 32:4, maps to √
תמ, how about √תמת?

While √תמת and √תמת are more common, the combination with δίκαιος in Deut 25:15 and 32:4 points to completeness as the dominant theme.

	תמים, ת	אמת	שלם-1	אמן	ישר	Total
ἀληθινός	3	11	3	2	0	43
Total	134	137	28	30	27	

Table 12: ἀληθινός as Complete

Many Waters, 19:8

The expression appears in the NT only in Rev 1:15; 14:2; 17:1; and 19:8. But in the LXX, it translates מים רבים, which is used in five ways, catalogued below. The most common reference is to the Mediterranean sea, and the noise and danger associated with its waves.

1. The rock that Moses smote

Num. 20:11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

2. A loud noise

(Ezekiel's cherubim) Ezek. 1:24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of **great waters**, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

Ezek. 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of **many waters**: and the earth shined with his glory.

Psa. 93:4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of **many waters**, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

3. A dangerous circumstance

2Sam. 22:17 He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;

Is. 17:13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

Jer. 51:55 Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: (She is pictured as destroyed by great waves, a description appropriate to a tsunami. While Babylon faces no risk of a literal tsunami, Jeremiah, living in the levant, would have known of the tsunamis that through history have afflicted that area.⁵⁸)

Psa. 18:16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of **many waters**.

Psa. 32:6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of **great waters** they shall not come nigh unto him.

Psa. 144:7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of **great waters**, from the hand of strange children;

4. The great seas, mainly the Mediterranean, e.g., enabling commerce

(Israel) Num. 24:7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in **many waters**, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

(Tyre) Is. 23:3 And by **great waters** the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

(Babylon) Jer. 51:13 O thou that dwellest upon **many waters**, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

(Israel's favorable position for trade) Ezek. 17:5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by **great waters**, and set it as a willow tree. ... 8 It was planted in a good soil by **great waters**, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. ... 19:10 ¶ Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of **many waters**.

(Tyre) Ezek. 27:26 Thy rowers have brought thee into **great waters**: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

(Assyria) Ezek. 31:5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the **multitude of waters**, when he shot forth. ... 7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by **great waters**.

(Paralleled to the deep with its floods) Ezek. 31:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the **great waters** were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

(Egypt) Ezek. 32:13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the **great waters**; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

58 The eastern Mediterranean is prone to earthquakes and the resulting tsunamis. Maramai A, Brizuela B, Graziani L. The Euro-Mediterranean Tsunami Catalogue. Ann. Geophys. [Internet]. 2014Aug.28 [cited 2024Feb.22];57(4):S0435. Available from: <https://www.annalsofgeophysics.eu/index.php/annals/article/view/6437>, <https://doi.org/10.4401/ag-6437>

Hab. 3:15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of **great waters**.

Psa. 29:3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.

Psa. 77:19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the **great waters**, and thy footsteps are not known.

Psa. 107:23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in **great waters**;

Song 8:7 **Many waters** cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

5. Abundant springs

Jer. 41:12 Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the **great waters** that are in Gibeon.

2Chr. 32:4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find **much water**?

παντοκράτωρ 19:6 etc.

The use of the word to translate שדי is restricted to Job (who uses it without preceding אל). Elsewhere the dominant LXX rendering is “thy God” (Gen 17:1), “my God” (Gen 43:14), or simply “God” (Isa 13:6). (Exod 6:3 is interesting: θεὸς ὢν αὐτῶν, “being their God”.) When it is compounded with another name, it is אל, not יהוה, so its use with κύριος suggests we should look back to צבאות and not שדי as the antecedent.

	צבאות		Total
παντοκράτωρ	173	15	181
Total	315	48	

Table 13: Hebrew antecedents of παντοκράτωρ

Job uses either κύριος παντοκράτωρ or ὁ παντοκράτωρ, never θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

Only other NT use is 2 Cor 6:18, quotation from 2 Sam 7:8. This word is the standard LXX rendering for צבאות *tseba'ot* H6635 in the common expression “Lord of Hosts.” But this does not work in 1:8, the first instance, where παντοκράτωρ is a stand-alone title, not “lord of” This can only correspond to the use of the word in Job to reflect the title by which the patriarchs knew God (Exod 6:3), שדי. Perhaps in 1:8 the point is to bracket the temporal trilogy with the two names of Exod 6:3, the ancient name Shadday and the covenant name YHWH. Also Rev 16:14; 19:15 God Almighty must be אל שדי.

κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ may reflect יהוה אלהי הצבאות, which is translated three ways in the LXX.

- LXX Amos translates it with the expression we have here: Amos 4:13; 5:14-16, 27; it also occurs in Amos 6:8, but the name is lacking in the LXX. Our expression also appears in Hos 12:6; Nah 3:5 and Zech 10:3 (for יהוה צבאות)
- LXX Psalms translates it κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων, Ps 59:6 (5), 80:5, 20 (4, 19), 84:9 (8), 89:9 (8).

- Other OT passages translate it κύριος παντοκράτωρ: 2 Sam. 5:10; 1 Kings 19:10, 14; Jer. 5:14; 15:16; 35:17; 38:17; 44:7

Amos is clearly the source for the expression as used here, and note how he introduces it:

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, **The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.**

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith **the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.**

5:27 has conjunctive accent, Merakah, between LORD and God, in spite of the syntactic pressure to separate them. But we do have disjunctive Geresh in 5:16.

Some final thoughts:

- 1:8 establishes two names, κύριος ὁ θεός (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) and ὁ παντοκράτωρ. The link to Exod 6:3 seems unmistakable. This is not the split in Amos, Lord vs. God Almighty.
- Rev 16:14 and 19:15 ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ “God Almighty” use the title apart from κύριος, but this recalls the translation of אֱלֹהֵי-צְבָאוֹת in LXX Amos.
- The compound form κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ is used in doxologies in Rev. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6. In the last of these, ἡμῶν after ὁ θεὸς reminds us that the two titles of 1:8 are still distinct.
- The final instance, 21:22 uses this full title to describe what replaces the temple in the heavenly Jerusalem, together with “and the Lamb.”

The most direct exposition of 19:6 is probably to recall the prophecies of Amos that use this title. Here are all of them.

The first is clearly a declaration of his sovereignty in judgment:

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, **The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.**

The next two appear to offer forgiveness:

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so **the LORD, the God of hosts,** shall be with you, as ye have spoken. 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that **the LORD God of hosts** will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

But these are immediately followed with a declaration of judgment, which characterizes the last two instances as well:

Amos 5:16 Therefore **the LORD, the God of hosts,** the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith **the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.**

Amos 6:8 ¶ The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith **the LORD the God of hosts**, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

The division by ἡμῶν in MT does take us back to the alignment of 1:8 with Exod 6:3 as well. But the literary dynamics here, the conflation of two different Hebrew words into παντοκράτωρ, are too complex to tackle in a sermon, and are better suited to exploration in a seminar.

Use of ἀμήν (Table 14)

Ref	Speaker	Responding to	Topic
1:6	John? (note 1)	John	Doxology
1:7	John? (note 2)	John?	Prediction of the Lord's return with clouds
1:18	John, interjection?	Lord Jesus	I am he that liveth, was dead, am alive
3:14	Lord Jesus	None	A title he claims for himself (ὁ Ἀμήν) cf. 2 Cor 1:20
5:13	Every creature? (note 1)	Every creature	Doxology
5:14	Four living creatures		
7:12a	Angels	Great multitude	Doxology: salvation to our God
7:12a	Angels	Angels?	Doxology: blessing and honor to God
19:4	Elders & living creatures	Great multitude	Doxology
22:20	Lord Jesus	John?	Promise of his return, cf. 1:7
22:21	John	John (note 3)	Closing blessing

Table 14: Uses of ἀμήν in the Revelation

Resolving the question marks

1. Speaker in 1:6; 5:13, following a doxology: compare the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:13. If the doxology is seen as stereotyped, perhaps a customary formula, the speaker may add his own "Amen" to say, "I'm not simply repeating this, but endorse it personally." Schlier, TDNT 1:337, cites R. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gl. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tm. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tm. 4:18; Hb. 13:21; 1 Pt. 4:11; 5:11; Jd. 25 as well as much patristic literature.
2. Response to a divine promise. While John himself is repeating the promise in 1:7, 22:20 shows that it is recognized as coming from the Lord, to whom he is ultimately saying Amen. Schlier.
3. Closing a blessing, again perhaps because it may be seen as stereotyped, as frequently in the epistles: Rom 15:33; 16:24; 1 Cor 16:24; 2 Cor 13:14; etc. Or to close one's own prayer, Eph 3:21.

Verbs for Rejoicing, χαίρω G5463 and ἀγαλλιάω G21 (19:7)

Table 15 explores different verbs for rejoicing in an effort to clarify 19:7. The use of ἀγαλλιάω and almost never χαίρω for רגן, which indicates a ringing cry, while χαίρω and never ἀγαλλιάω renders √חמַש, supports the distinction I suggest between inner joy and outward expression.

	גיל	רגן	הלל	חמַש v	חמַש a	עלז	שוש	שלום		Total
χαίρω	8	1	0	12	2	1	4	2		76
ἀγαλλιάω, ομαι	26	23	2	0	0	4	4	0		71
καυχάομαι	0	1	9	0	0	2	0	0		40
Total	48	53	167	157	21	17	27	480		

Table 15: Verbs for Rejoicing

Rev 17:1-19:10, Rise and Fall of the Great Whore

Commodity	Ezekiel 27	Rev 18:11-14
Fir trees	5	
Cedar	5	
Oaks	6	
Ivory	6, 15	12
Linen	7, 16	12
Silk		12
Costly dyes: Blue, Purple, Scarlet	7, 16	12
Men	8-11, 13, 14	13
Silver	12	12
Iron	12, 19	12
Tin	12	
Lead	12	
Brass	13	12
Marble		12
Beasts: Horses, Mules	14	13
Precious wood: ebony, thiyne	15	12
Precious stones: Emeralds, Coral,	16, 22	12

Commodity	Ezekiel 27	Rev 18:11-14
Agate		
Fabrics	16, 20,24	
Wheat	17	13
Honey	17	
Oil	17	13
Balm	17	
Wine	18	13
Wool	18	
Spices: Cassia, Calamus, Cinnamon, Frankincense	19, 22	13
Lambs, Rams, Goats	21	13
Gold	22	12
Chests	24	
Chariots		13

Table 16: Commodities in Ezekiel 27 and Rev18:11-14