

Revelation 17. The Beastly Beast. One of the angels called to me and said: *I'll show you the great prostitute who rules over much—with the kings, she committed fornication, and inhabitants were drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality.*

After being carried in spirit [“the” (τον) is not there] to a desert, I saw a woman [γυναικα; not “prostitute”] sitting a red beast which was covered with blasphemous name, seven heads, and ten horns. Blasphemous, intelligent & powerful. Dressed in purple & scarlet, adorned in gold, jewels & pearls, her hand held a golden cup, filled with abominations and filth associated from her sexual immoralities. Her title was written on her forehead: *Babylon the Great, Mother of Prostitutes and Abominations of the Land.* I realized she was drunk—with the very blood of those who bore witness to Jesus.

Q What is useful about John calling the female a prostitute versus a woman?

Q Why is she dressed this way?

Q Why is this character female?

The angel was not amused—“Why are you astonished?” I’ll explain her, & her beast. Earth’s inhabitants whose names are not in the book of life, from the creation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast. Yet, the beast nonetheless is not an eighth king; he belongs to the seven to be destroyed. The ten horns represent a temporary power which will be used to war against the Lamb. A stupid fight for the Lamb is the Lord of lords, and King of kings—with Him His followers will be called chosen, the faithful followers. Yet, the beast will hate the prostitute, ruining her, eating her flesh, leaving her naked to burn. It is the Lord God who designed this so God’s words will be fulfilled. And just who is this “woman?” The great city which rules over earth’s kings.

Q Why will people be amazed when they see the beast? Why do people wind up hating her?

Q What was “His purpose” by allowing the beast to rule? What words were to be fulfilled?

Q To what extent does this metaphor of evil comfort you? Bother you?

Q Best guess: Babylon then, or a Babylon to come? “The great city which rules over the kings of the earth.”

REVELATION 17

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. ²With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” [actually “sexual immoralities”]

³Then the angel carried me away in the [τον is not there] Spirit [?] into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵This title was written on her forehead this mystery [“secret” or “sign”]:

BABYLON THE GREAT

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

⁶I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

⁷Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

⁹“This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. ¹¹The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

¹²“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

¹⁵Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.

¹⁸The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 18:1-10. Babylon is denounced.

Then another angel, whose very presence illuminated the earth, authoritatively shouted—

*Babylon the so-called “great” has fallen!
She was a home for every evil you can think
of, a veritable prison of everything evil.
People have drunk her adultery wine, kings
have done unspeakable sexual acts with her,
and the earth’s oligarchs grew rich from her
sensuality.*

Then, another voice, also from heaven—

*Come out of her—my people—so you do not
share in her evil, so you will not receive her
plagues. Her evil is piled high to heaven—
the Lord God remembers her evil. Give back
to her, double, what she has done—mix a
double portion from her own cup of evil
Give her as much torture & grief as luxury
& glory she gave herself. She still boasts:*

***I am the queen—not a widow; I do not
grieve.***

So what? One day the evil she gave out will come back to overtake her: death, mourning, famine. Consumed by fire; the Lord God ensures justice.

When the kings of earth who committed unspeakable sexual perversions with her, shared her sensuality, see the smoke of her funeral bier, they will weep & wail. Terrified by her punishment, they will cry out:

Woe, woe, oh great city. Oh Babylon, city of power! In just one hour your doom has come!

- Q Why was it important for the first messenger to proclaim publicly the nature of Babylon, the evil one? What was his goal?
- Q What was the reason for the next angel to proclaim publicly what people’s response should be? Will it not happen regardless?
- Q Why would she assert she is not widow, never mourning? Added value to the female metaphor?
- Q Just what is the crisis of Babylon’s demise? Why will it take “an hour?”

REVELATION 18:1-10

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ²With a mighty voice he shouted:

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil [or *unclean*] spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. ³For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

“Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; ⁵for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. ⁶Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. ⁷Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts—”

“I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.”

⁸Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

⁹When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. ¹⁰Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry—

“Woe! Woe, O great city,
O Babylon, city of power!

In one hour your doom [κρίσις] has come!”

The oligarchs will weep & wail—no one is buying their stuff any more—no gold, no silver, no jewels, no pearls, no linen, no purple, no silk, no scarlet cloth, no citron flagrant wood, no items of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, or marble; also no spices—cinnamon, incense, myrrh, frankincense; no wine or olive oil, no fine flour or wheat; no cattle & sheep; no horses and carriages, and—the bodies and souls of people.

The profit is gone; riches have vanished, never to be recovered. The merchants are terrified by her punishment. They who used her to get rich freaked out: “Woe to her!”

Q So about what crisis these are these merchants kvetching?

Q Why all the detailed, lengthy list? Why doesn’t “everything” work?

So, in one hour the wealth of an era is ruined. Ship captains and their sailors are freaked: “Was there ever a city like this?” Throwing dust & rubbish on their heads, they wail: “Woe! All of us on the seas got rich from her, and in one hour? Boom, it’s all gone...”

An angel powerful enough to throw a boulder the size of a millstone into the sea did it, and then said:

It is this violence which will destroy Babylon—never to be found again. No music will ever be heard. No

tradesman will exist. The millstone’s

sound will never be heard. A lamp’s light will never shine again. That sweet sound of the bridegroom & bride will never be heard again. Your merchants may have been great, but by your [Babylon’s] magic, all nations were led astray. Why? In her was found the blood of prophets and the saints, to say nothing of all who have already been killed on earth.

Q Just one question—why is all this detail being provided about “her” evil and its consequences?

REVELATION 18:11-24

The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more—¹²cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; ¹³cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.

¹⁴They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’

¹⁵The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn ¹⁶and cry out—

Woe! Woe, O great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!

¹⁷In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin! Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ¹⁸When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, “Was there ever a city like this great city?” ¹⁹They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out—

Woe! Woe, O great city,
where all who had ships on the sea
became rich through her wealth!
In one hour she has been brought to ruin!

²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.

²¹Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said—

“With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. ²²The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. ²³The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. ²⁴In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.”