

Revelation 17: The Great Prostitute and the Scarlet Beast

Bowls of Judgment and Divine Wrath

16.2: First Bowl of Judgment – Terrible Sores

Sixth Egyptian plague – Exodus 9.9-11

16.3: Second Bowl – Sea Turns to Blood

First Egyptian Plague – Exodus 7.14-21, the waters of the Nile turned to blood

16.4: Third Bowl – Inland Waters Turn to Blood

Exodus 7.14-21; In the Third Trumpet Judgment, a burning star poisoned the waters (8.10-11)

16.8-9: Fourth Bowl – The Sun Scorches People

Fire: Biblical Instrument of Divine Judgment – 1.14; 2.18; 8.5; 8.7-8; 9.17-18; 11.5; 18.8; 20.10, 14-15

16.10-11: Fifth Bowl - Beast's Throne in Darkness and Pain

Beast's throne (13.2) overthrown as his reign will be 'plunged into darkness'; Ninth Egyptian Plague (Ex. 10)

16.12-16: Sixth Bowl - Preparation for Final War at Har-Magedon

unclean spirits like frogs – an unclean creature (Leviticus 11.10-11); and an Egyptian Plague (Ex. 8.1-15)

Armageddon – end-of-the-world battle predicted in OT (Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 12-14) and in 2 Thess. 2.8

'mountain of Megiddo' – plain of Megiddo and Mt. Carmel? Or symbolic?

16.17-21: Seventh Bowl – Cosmic Judgment

The Destruction of the Wicked Cities

17.1-20.15: The Final Judgment

17.1-19.5: The Destruction of Babylon the Great

A large interpretative review of the Sixth and Seventh Bowl Judgments (16.12-21)

17.1-3 The Great Prostitute, the Waters, the Kings, and the Scarlet Beast

'one of the seven angels . . .' – describing anew what is prophesied by an angel in chapter 16

Prostitute/whore – Babylon is seductive and alluring, drawing people away from Christ

Remember that Babylonian Empire was effectively defeated and destroyed By Persia in 539 B.C.

Babylon = (1) Roman Empire or (2) The worldly empire akin to it when these events occur

porneia – sexual immorality, and figuratively, the egregious and wicked idolatry and immorality of the apostate world; ‘Tyre played the harlot with the kingdoms of the earth’ (Isaiah 23.17) – figurative prostitution; economic exploitation

‘into the desert in the Spirit’ – the place of a prophetic commission, Ezekiel 2.2; 3.12, 14; and Isaiah 21.1-2

Great Prostitute = Woman on a Blasphemous Scarlet Beast – icon of idolatry

17.4-6 The Luxurious Depravity of the Prostitute

Incredible luxury and depravity (also 18.16)

Lit. ‘golded with gold’ (also 18.16), like a very wealthy courtesan in 1C Rome

Jeremiah 51.7: Babylon is ‘a gold cup’ . . . ‘that has made the whole earth drunk’

Rome as ‘Babylon the Great’ – 1 Peter 5.13; 2 Baruch 11.1; 67.7; 79.1), drunk with ‘the blood of the saints’

Under Nero, Christians ‘were covered with skins of beasts, torn by dogs, nailed to crosses . . . doomed to the flames and burned to serve as a nightly illumination’ (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44)

Lit. ‘amazed with great amazement’ –(Mark 5.20; Matt. 15.31) Why so amazed?

17.7-14 An Angel Interprets the Vision

God = ‘one who was and is and is to come’ – (1.4, 8; 4.8; 11.17; 16.5) contrasted with the beast (‘is not’)

Book of life – akin to a roll of citizens; underlines the sovereign will and reign of God

Counterfeit resurrection of the beast – (also 13.3, 12-14) deceives people

seven heads = seven hills. Rome is a city memorably built on seven hills.

What does it mean that the woman was ‘sitting on many waters’? (17.1, 15)

‘water’ as a metaphor for inhabitants – Isa. 8.7; 17.12-13; Jer. 46.7-8; 47.2

7 kings – generally understood as Roman emperors (J Caesar 44 B.C., Augustus 27 B.C.-14 A.D., Tiberius 14-37, Caligula 37-41, Claudius 41-54, Nero 54-68, Glba/Otho/Vitellius 68-69, Vespasian 69-79, Titus 79-81, Domitian 81-96, Nerva 96-98, and Trajan 98-117). Literal or Figurative? Roman era or Future?

The beast of 17.8 is the eighth – one ‘who was and is not’; seemingly resurrected (13.3-4, 8, 14-15)

10 horns – Daniel 7.7-8, 20-25; Rome was divided into 10 provinces ruled by client kings and prefects

Four Groups: Antichrist, the earth-dwellers who worship him, the 10 kings, and the ‘kings of the earth’ who join the coalition of evil (16.14, 16). Their purpose is to make war against the Lamb/Christ (17.14)

17.15-18 The Prostitute is Killed by the Beast

Civil War among the coalition of evil; a la Ezekiel 38.21 (‘everyone’s sword will be against his brother’)