

NOTES FOR REVELATION 17

“John self-consciously and dramatically weaves into his drama more biblical material than any other New Testament writer.” –Kenneth Gentry

“...it is a book which can scarcely be understood without reference to the Old Testament texts to which it constantly and variously alludes.” –Provan

WHO IS BABYLON?

For dispensationalists, there are two possibilities: the ancient city of Babylon *or* apostate Christendom.

The modern majority position is that Babylon is ancient imperial Rome *and* Babylon is the entire anti-Christian world.

In the ancient church, frequently the oracles against Babylon were allegories against Israel. The reason for using allegory is Israel's rejection of God's revelation. An example is Cyprian, who held that the whore is the symbol of religious corruption.

The modern minority view, from the 1700s to the present, is that Babylon is the apostate church of the Old Covenant, centered in the temple priesthood in Jerusalem.

(Preterists allow *application* to the Pope/anti-Christian world.)

“...an objective and continuous reading of the whole section which leads up to chapter 17 makes the identification of the prostitute with Jerusalem and Judaism neither surprising nor unexpected. It is a prelude to the story of the end of Judaism, the Old Economy.” –Corsini

We have to begin with Revelation 11:8; an important phrase is that it is the Great City and it is Sodom and Egypt. Now the image shifts to Babylon.

ISRAEL AS A WHORE

Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a harlot! / It was full of justice; / Righteousness lodged in it, / But now murderers.

- Ezekiel 16 and 23
- Hosea, where Israel/Gomer is an adulterous wife/harlot and commits adultery
- Jesus speaking to the chief priests and elders in Matthew 21:23, 31b-32
- Jesus to Israel: Mathew 12:39; 16:4 – an evil and adulterous generation
- Jesus to Israel: Mark 8:38-9:1 – an adulterous and sinful generation and some will live to see Him come in judgment

Tyre in Isaiah 23:15 Now it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot

–and–

Nineveh in Nahum 3:1-4 Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. ²The noise of a whip And the noise of rattling wheels, Of galloping horses, Of clattering chariots! ³Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, A great number of bodies, Countless corpses—They stumble over the corpses— ⁴Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries. are charged with being whores.

They were both in a covenant of sorts. Nineveh repented under Jonah and Tyre's King Hiram entered into a covenant of brotherhood with Israel (Amos 1:9).

PARALLELS BETWEEN THE WHORE AND THE BRIDE IN THE LITERARY STRUCTURE

JOHN'S INTRODUCTION

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

Revelation 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

JOHN'S TRANSPORT

Revelation 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

CHARACTERS CONTRASTED

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

Revelation 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

ENVIRONMENTS CONTRASTED

Revelation 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God

RELATIONSHIPS CONTRASTED

Revelation 17:3, 7³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns....⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Revelation 21:9, 11a⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ...¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

DESCRIPTIONS CONTRASTED

Revelation 18:2, 8, 10, 17, 19, 21² And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! ...⁸ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her....¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' ...¹⁷ For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance...¹⁹ "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is

Revelation 21:4-6, 12-14⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ...¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.¹⁴ Now the wall of

made desolate.’ ... ²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

MEASUREMENTS CONTRASTED

Revelation 11:1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

Revelation 21:15-17 ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. ¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

NATIONS CONTRASTED

Revelation 11:2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

Revelation 21:24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE STREETS CONTRASTED

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

Revelation 22:1-2 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

THE VOICE OF GOD

Revelation 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

Revelation 22:3 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.

Revelation 21:5-9 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” ⁶ And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

THE BRIDE/THE NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:1-2 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

2 Corinthians 3:7-14 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. ¹⁰ For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. ¹¹ For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. ¹²Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

Galatians 4:21-26 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Hebrews 8:1-13 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” ¹³ In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.