

Revelation Chapter 17-19 Draft

Revelation 16:15 - The 3rd Interlude:

The interlude for the bowl judgement is short but powerful. Found in Revelation 16:15 it is a direct statement from Jesus: 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) Revelation 16:15 ESV

The encouragement from Jesus may seem short but it speaks volumes in light of the upcoming chapters. To stay awake invokes Matthew 25. Matthew 24 is famously known as an end times passage, while some of it speaks to Jerusalem’s fall in 70 AD other aspects remain unfulfilled. A gathering away of the wicked as in the days of Noah has not taken place (Matt 24:37-42) , nor has the gospel been preached to the whole world (Matt 24:14). Matthew 25 is a continuation of Matthew 24, Jesus states in continuation of the disciples question, “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” by stating then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. The virgins being the believers, the bridegroom being Jesus. Five of the virgins are foolish and five are wise. The foolish are those who let the oil of their lamp run dry while the wise ones bring extra oil. When the bridegroom comes there is a panic. The wise virgins have oil ready for their lamp however the foolish virgins have run out. They ask their fellow virgins for some of their oil but oil cannot be shared. We find out that it is too late for the foolish virgins. The wise virgins enter into the marriage feast and the door is shut behind them.

The foolish virgin are believers who partake in the ways of the world and neglect their relationship with Jesus. The wise virgins are the ones who have not lost their first love for Jesus (Revelation 2:1-7). The statement of Jesus is to stay away. While all the virgins fell asleep the wise ones didn’t fall into the same temptations as the foolish virgins. Jesus goes on to warn us to keep our garments on. This is a metaphor for remaining spiritually faithful to Him as opposed to spiritual adultery. To the church in Laodicea he warns them that their relationship with the world has left them “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. In Revelation 17:16 the Great Prostitute will be made desolate and naked, devoured and burned with fire. This judgment is against her spiritual adultery. It was common in the ancient world for those caught in adultery to be stripped naked and punished for their offense.

Jesus pleads with us, He is coming soon, remain faithful!

Revelation 17 - The Harlot and the Beast

The Great Prostitute - Revelation 17:1-7

Revelation 17 opens with one of the seven angels giving John a closer look into the bowl judgments. The angel tells him it’s the judgment of the great prostitute “seated on many waters.” The many waters directly refer to Jeremiah 51:13: “13 O you who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come; the thread of your life is cut.” We are foreshadowed to the end that is coming to this “great prostitute.”

Revelation 17 is contrasted with Revelation 21-22. In 17:1, one of the seven angels tells John he will show him the great prostitute. Shortly following, in verse 3, he is “carried away in the Spirit.” In Revelation 21, John is told one of the seven angels will show him the Bride of Christ (21:9) and is then “carried away in the Spirit” to see the Bride.

The angel describes the prostitute as one “2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” - Revelation 17:2 ESV. John then sees the woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns.

The description of this beast combines the aspects of the dragon in Revelation 12:3 and the blasphemous names of the beast of the sea in Revelation 13.

The woman herself is dressed in scarlet and purple, with jewelry and a cup in her hand full of “abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.” In verse 5, we are told who this woman is, it is Babylon, and she is drunk with the blood of those who have died for Jesus.

“5 And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” 6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.” - Revelation 17:5-6 ESV

As stated previously, Babylon is the world system that seduces the world population into intoxication with itself. Its desire, led by Satan himself, is to draw Christians from denying Christ; it will seek to kill and imprison those who follow the lamb to discourage believers, and it will aim to intoxicate the people in the world so that they do not realize their need for Jesus. This is our true enemy, the one who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy us. John, at first glance, is in awe of her. The angel speaking to John asks why he is marveling at this sign and begins to give John an explanation.

The Beast - Revelation 17:8-18

The angel will begin in verse 8 by stating the beast was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. This is speaking of the Antichrist and Satan being the opposite of Jesus and Yahweh. Where God is the one who is and was and is to come the beast is the one who was, and is not, and is about to rise from the pit. This is the idea of being anti or opposite, where God is the one who was, and is, and is to come; the beast is the one who was, and is not, and is about to rise. Those who do not follow Christ will marvel at the beast and follow it. As we mentioned in chapter 13, one of the options for 666 is Emperor Nero. There may be more evidence of Nero being the meaning of 666 here in Revelation 17. Emperor Nero died extremely suddenly and suspiciously. People feared that Nero would come back. Many claiming to be Nero actually did try to gather armies in the East and attack Rome. Nero was, and is not, and is to come in popular belief. This could further point to a writing date during the 90s AD, as Domitian was considered a second Nero. Almost as if Nero had been resurrected in Domitian. This point can stand alone, separate from the meaning of 666; as discussed in that chapter, getting Emperor Nero out of 666 requires some finagling of the name and number. As we will see next, Rome is definitely in view as the enemy’s headquarters in Revelation.

The angel speaking of the seven heads says the heads are the seven mountains on which the woman is seated, yet another polemic against Rome. Rome is famously the city of seven hills. The hills are Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian, and Aventine. Babylon is a code name for Rome, the symbol of the world system. We have coins where the Roman goddess Roma sits on seven hills, much like what we just read in this chapter.

The hills are also seven kings, five who have fallen, one who is, and one who has not come yet but will seemingly reign for a little while. The five who “fell” likely means they have died; the one who is would be the current Emperor, and the one coming would be a future emperor. Interestingly, this parallels the beast as the one who was, and is, and is to come. The Bible tells us many antichrists will come while at the same time making it seem like there is an Antichrist, a final world leader who will gather forces to attack Israel.

There is too much speculation to say which Emperor was in view for the first, which affects who would be the seventh. No one agrees on which Emperor you start, as multiple options give reasonable or interesting conclusions. What can be stated without a doubt is that, in John's day, one is still to come; this last one would likely be more hostile toward Christianity than the ones who came before. This, too, is a polemic against Rome, which had conquered Israel and persecuted Christians.

This will all culminate with an 8th emperor (one who would be after the 7th one still to come), who is identified as the beast itself (17:11). That the beast is called the eighth could be another number (gematria) illustration. Jesus' name in Greek adds up to 888. It just so happens that there are 888 Greek words in the Book of Revelation. The eighth beast, which "belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction," is likely predicting the future Antichrist, who will be worse than the seven before it as he will be the last.

Next, the angel tells us about the ten horns, which are "ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast" (ESV). The ten horns on a final beast recall Daniel 7:4-7, in which Daniel sees a final beast with ten horns in his vision. As before, we know that John is intimately familiar with his OT and expects us to be as well. In Daniel and Revelation, the ten horns are ten kings. Many scholars propose the ten horns are the ten kings of territories Rome had conquered, not necessarily an exact ten nations, but in a metaphorical sense. Caesar was the leader of the Roman empire, and he would put kings in charge of places that had been submitted to the Romans. King Herod, at the birth of Jesus, was one such king. Others view this as ten literal kings or nations that will support the future Antichrist at the end of the age. What can be said for sure is no one knows. I would avoid panicking when you hear on the news that "ten nations met." It's always possible that it's the fulfillment, but as with much of Revelation, we can get into much trouble taking things too literally. If literal, we could never know which exact ten nations met to give authority to the beast. We don't even know if the final Antichrist is on the earth yet or not. We don't know how far along we are in God's plan. We need to be ready and have our faith in Jesus.

Further adding to the chaos of interpreting this as modern-day events are verses 15 and 16. The waters will represent the people who follow the beast, an anti-believer consisting of peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages (compare to Revelation 5:9, 7:9). In verse 16, the beast and the kings turn against the prostitute. The Roman Empire and its allies would often turn on itself. Caesars would be assassinated, and new regimes would take over. In movies and books about the end times, the Antichrist regime is portrayed as the world is going to be so coordinated in the end times against the Christians. While there will be a united attack on Christianity and Israel, scripture gives us a picture of chaos, self-destructive actions, and an inability to unite truly. It could be that the Antichrist comes amid this kind of chaos and brings unity long enough to gather forces against Jerusalem. This has happened in some form or fashion before; the most recent comparison could be Nazi Germany.

We, as believers, need to know that Jesus is sovereign; He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will be coming to judge the world as a conquering king. In the meantime, He will use the wickedness against itself as judgment for its evil.

Revelation 17 opens with one of the seven angels giving John a closer look into the bowl judgments. The angel tells him it's the judgment of the great prostitute who is "seated on many waters." The many waters is a clear reference to Jeremiah 51:13: "13 O you who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come; the thread of your life is cut." We are foreshadowed to the end that is coming to this "great prostitute." Revelation 17 is greatly contrasted with Revelation 21-22. In 17:1, one of the seven angels tells John he will show him the great prostitute. Shortly following, in verse 3, he is "carried away in the Spirit." In Revelation 21 John is told one of the seven angels will show the Bridge (21:9) and is then "carried away in the Spirit" where he is shown the Bride. The

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Revelation 18: The Fall of Babylon

In Chapter 18, we are reintroduced to Babylon and shown different details. The appearance of Babylon certainly is not pleasant, being called a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, unclean bird, and every unclean and detestable beast, and a place of spiritual adultery. John speaks of the kings and merchants who have grown rich because of the world system.

The most crucial passage of this chapter begins in verse 4. There is a warning from God to come out of the world lest we partake in her sins and share in the plagues upon her. Today, it is rare to find many believers who desire to

live separate from the world, to live in holiness, and to be taught in ways of righteousness. It is up to every believer to make their own choice, but I sincerely hope this book will help even one person see the horrible things coming to the wicked, realize they have become lukewarm, and decide to repent and come out of the world.

Further verses speak of the judgment against Babylon, how she has sown so much evil and iniquity, and the time for her to pay for it has come. Plagues will come upon her, and she shall be burned with fire. The kings and merchants will weep and wail because of her. What is interesting is that the kings and the multitude are the ones who came against her (Revelation 17:15-16). These may be a separate group of people attacked by those mentioned in Revelation 17 and thus are not included in the multitude and the kings mentioned. Another view (and the more likely view, in my opinion) is that they brought themselves to destruction without knowing it, and amid its destruction and chaos, they regret losing it. Previous judgments have seen the Lord using wickedness against itself, letting it self-destroy itself (see the Trumpet Judgments). What is sad is even in the destruction and loss of everything that made them materially rich, they do not repent. Instead, they mourn over what they have lost.

As we examine our lives, how would our reaction be if we lost what we enjoy in this world? It is not uncommon to see Christians more excited for things that are not Jesus than they are excited for Jesus. Christians will go wild for their favorite sports team but be silent during worship. We will devote hours to our hobbies and neglect the secret place. I have heard Christians mourn that Jesus may be coming soon because they want to get married or have kids or grandkids. We grieve because we have not accomplished something we desire to get done. That is not the cry of the faithful bride who cries, "Come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:17). It is the cry of those who live in Babylon (Revelation 18:11-19). If we are not excited about the coming of Jesus, it means something is not right in us spiritually; the wonderful thing is Jesus knocks at the door, waiting for us to open the door and spend time with Him (Revelation 3:20).

The Marriage Feast of the Lamb

After John's vision of the fall of Babylon, John sees a great multitude in heaven celebrating the defeat of Babylon, followed by continued worship of God seated on the throne (19:1-5). From Revelation 4 to now, the position of the Lord on the throne has not changed. Everything is going according to His will.

In verse 6, John hears "what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder." This great multitude is revealed as the Bride of Christ (verse 7). The description of a "roar like many waters" was first used of Jesus in Revelation 1:15. This description was later used for the 144,000 in Revelation 14, as was it "being like thunder" (Revelation 14:2). There are a couple of implications, the first is that these people sound like Jesus, that is an incredible thought and is consistent with the rest of scripture. We are promised to be made like Him (1 John 3:2); we are called the "body of Christ" for a reason (1 Corinthians 12). Part of our hope of the coming of Jesus is the end to the sinful nature in our lives; we will be wholly sanctified, and the work that was started will have been finished. I cannot wait for this to happen; I long in my spirit for this to happen!

This passage is famous for the marriage supper of the Lamb, and there are a few Old Testament references. In verses 7-8, the Bride has "made herself ready" and was "granted to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure." Psalm 45, a messianic psalm, speaks of the Lord's everlasting throne that will last forever and ever. The scepter of His kingdom is of uprightness. It says in Psalm 45:13 that a princess will be clothed with robes interwoven with gold and led to the King. In Ezekiel 16, abominable Jerusalem is promised to be dressed in fine linen and covered

in silk. Even though Jerusalem had been full of wickedness when Ezekiel was writing, Ezekiel heard from the Lord a promise to make her pure again. This is ultimately fulfilled in the coming of Jesus with the Bride of Christ being adorned in purity and being the “New Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2).

We are called as the Bride of Christ to make ourselves ready to be prepared. In the interlude of Revelation 16 between the six bowl judgments and the final bowl judgment, we are told by Jesus Himself: “15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) - Revelation 16:15 (ESV). Going back to the church in Laodicea, a church that had not maintained its purity in Christ but was categorized as “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and, naked (3:17)”, is told to come to Jesus, repent, and receive from him, among other things, a “white garment to clothe themselves and the shame of their nakedness.” If we find ourselves in a position where we are not making ourselves and living as a pure bride for Christ, our only action is to come to Jesus, repent, and spend time in intimacy with Him (Revelation 3:20).

The marriage feast itself has Old Testament roots. These passages became a great source of hope for the exiled Jews who found themselves in Babylon and later returned to Judea to rebuild. Isaiah 25 is often at the forefront of discussion about the marriage feast. In Isaiah, God promises the defeat of “the city,” making it a “heap” and a “ruin.” This is what we see at the end of Chapter 18 and the beginning of Chapter 19: Babylon being made a heap and a ruin. The city is promised never to be rebuilt, and the nations will fear God and glorify Him. Isaiah prophesies that on His mountain, he will swallow up the covering of darkness on all the people, the “veil that is spread over all nations” (26:7) and that He will “swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces.” Give all of Isaiah 25 a read; it is fantastic! John uses a lot of this language to communicate what he sees in his visions. Isaiah 25:6 says this: “6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” Isaiah 25:6 (ESV). This is a source of thought for the marriage feast of the Bride of Christ, taking place on the “mountain” of God, Jerusalem, where we will celebrate the defeat of evil and the coming of our King to his Bride! In Jewish thought, the marriage feast occurred at the end of a great battle where some even thought Leviathan (a 7-headed dragon) would be served as the food. (Isaiah 27:1 “1 In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.”

The Rider on the White Horse and the Supper of God

Following the marriage feast, we have details about what is often called the eschatological supper of God. While some consider this the same as the marriage supper, most see it as two different events simultaneously. While the marriage supper is beautiful and contains descriptions of rich food, the supper of God is the defeat of the enemies of God and the subsequent feast of wild animals upon the wicked. In Revelation 19:11, Jesus, on a white horse, comes with eyes like a flame of fire with many crowns on his head and a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is “The Word of God.” From His mouth comes a sharp sword, and He is followed by the armies of heaven. He comes to make war (19:11) and strike down the nations (19:15) to rule them with a rod of iron.

After He comes, an angel calls to the birds, “Come and gather for the great supper of God.” The meal is the “flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses, their riders, and all men.” We are told in verse 19 that this is the beast, the kings who submit to him, and their armies. The beast and the false prophet (remember the identity of the false

prophet may be all those who follow the beast) are thrown into the Lake of Fire. Lastly, we end this chapter with details about the birds gorging themselves on the flesh of the wicked.

John's Use Of Ezekiel 38-39

The birds gorging themselves on the wicked also have a foundation in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 38-39, Ezekiel prophesies the Battle of Gog and Magog. In Ezekiel's vision, a great battle occurs with an "enemy from the North" (in Hebrew, it is "ha zaphon, the north" - Ezekiel 38:6, 15, 39:2; Isaiah 14:13). Because of the Euphrates River to the east of Israel, any enemy (especially Babylon) would have to come from the north to circumvent the river and the desert that lies between the River and Israel. This enemy will come against Israel and ultimately suffer its defeat by the hand of the Lord. The language used of the Lord defeating the enemy from the north is familiar to readers of Revelation. There is talk about an earthquake (Revelation 16:18), a sword (Revelation 19:15) being summoned against Gog; there will be pestilence (Revelation 6:8), hailstones (Revelation 16:21), fire (Revelation 16:8) and sulfur (Revelation 14:10, 19:20, 20:10).

As the angel calls all the birds, "Come gather for the great supper of God" (Revelation 19:17), we can see further parallels with Ezekiel 38-39. Both the coming of Christ and the supper of God in Revelation 19 and the end of the Battle of Gog and Magog end with the birds feasting on the bodies of the wicked. I don't believe John does this unintentionally, and I think it has some serious questions that need to be answered in Revelation 20. John seems to conclude that the coming of Christ to defeat the Antichrist and his armies is the battle spoken of in Ezekiel 38-39. We will explore this further in the next chapter.

Didn't this already happen in earlier chapters?

When Christ returns, a battle will occur over Jerusalem (Har Mageddon - Mount of Assembly). Jesus will not be stopped; He is the mighty warrior. It is the time for the defeat of Satan, his Antichrist, and those who follow him. By this point, this question may sound like a broken record, but one could ask in this passage, "Weren't the powers of darkness already defeated in several chapters now?" The answer is yes. The end of Chapter 19 is almost certainly a recapitulation (retelling of the same event) as those previous visions. The evidence of this statement is that Babylon is the Antichrist's army, those who are marked and worship the beast. In Revelation 16, the Antichrist and his followers are defeated in the Battle of Armageddon. John continues to share different details about the same event several times.