

Chapter 20

Seventh Bowl: The History and Fall of Babylon (17:1-18:24)

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20.1 Religious Babylon Destroyed (17:1–18)

1. The section 17:1-19:10 is a unit, with introductory and concluding remarks at the start (17:1-3a) and at the end (19:9-10).
2. Babylon's destruction was mentioned earlier in Rev. 14:8 and Rev. 16:17.
3. Babylon city's detailed religious and commercial influence and about what events have led up to her final spiritual and material devastation is mentioned in chapters 17-18.

Chapter 17 focuses on the religious aspects of the Babylonian system while chapter 18 focus on the material aspects of the system. The religious aspects falls into three parts:

1. the harlot and the beast (1-6a),
2. the significance of the symbolism (6b-14), and
3. the judgment of the great harlot (15-18).

20.1.1 The harlot and the beast (1-6a)

Revelation 17:1

And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits beside many waters,

1. **And one of the seven angels:** The angelic appointed to accompany John in this tour through Babylon is one of the seven angels who have administered the bowl judgments. Although not mentioned explicitly, it may have been the seventh since it is under his bowl that the announcement of Babylon's judgment comes.
2. **Come, I will show you:** The angel initiates the conversation with John by this invitation to witness a judgment. The very words he uses in Rev. 21:9 when introducing [the bride, the wife of the Lamb](#) is one of the many contrast between the Babylon here and the New Jerusalem.
3. **Judgment** This refers to a judicial verdict and its implementation. The future tenses of Rev. 17:14-17 give the verdict as a prediction, but the implementation comes in Rev. 18:3, 8, 10, 20.
4. **The great harlot (pornes)** This term applied to Babylon matches the practice of [fornication](#) (14:8, 11). It is indicative of her spiritual harlotry and representative of an ecclesiastical or religious facet that is a counterfeit

of the real one. In prophetic language the words such as prostitution, fornication, or adultery are equivalent to idolatry or religious apostasy. The OT prophets charged Nineveh (Nah 3:4), Tyre (Isa 23:15-17), Babylon (Jer 23:17), and even Jerusalem (Isa 1:21; Jer 3:8-9) with this crime. Hence, this woman is the epitome of spiritual fornication or idolatry. She leads the world in the pursuit of false religion: both paganism and perversion

Isa. 23:17. And it shall be, at the end of seventy years, that the Lord will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth

Jer. 2:20. ...you said, 'I will not transgress,' When on every high hill and under every green tree You lay down, playing the harlot

Jer. 13:27. I have seen your adulteries And your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your harlotry, Your abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! ...

Eze. 16:17-19. You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them ...

Hos. 2:5. For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers . . .

Nah. 3:4. Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries

Babylonian system started with the tower of Babel

Gen. 10:9-10. He [Nimrod] was a mighty hunter before the Lord . . . and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel . . . in the land of Shinar

Gen. 11:2-9. 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 . . . 4 And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.' 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth

It extends into the future culminating under the beast. Since the angel never uses the term [adultery](#), she need not be the apostate Israel or even the church. So this woman represents all false religion of all time,

including those who apostatize from the revealed religion of Christianity (cults). Her religious corruption is mentioned seven time in this chapter (17:1, 2, 2, 4, 5, 15 and 16) using the same root word. The emphasis continues later also (18:3, 3, 9; 19:2).

5. **Who sits beside many waters:** In his vision, he saw the woman sitting beside the waters which can mean **on the shore of** as in John 21:1. The term **many waters** represent peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues (17:15). These groups represent the world's population over whom she has control (17:3). There is also a geographical correspondence: Babylon is situated on the shores of Euphrates which is rich in canals, and other water bodies. Jeremiah confirms this also

Jer. 51:13. O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your covetousness

Revelation 17:2

with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell in the earth have become drunk from the wine of her fornication."

1. **The kings of the earth:** The leaders who join the Babylonian system compromising whatever spiritual principles are necessary. Assyria, Babylon, and others in the past did the same thing. Same was the case

with Rome in John's day, and will be especially true in the final days just before Christ returns. The apostate church also compromised and entered into an adulterous relation with the Babylonian system.

2. **Have committed fornication:** The harlot has committed fornication with all levels of society, from the kings to the common man. This accusation reappears in Rev. 18:3, 9. The Babylonian system gains international influence and domination in both religious and commercial realms with the political help of the beast. Such religious compromise is contrary to the Christian faith and it amounts to spiritual prostitution.
3. **Those who dwell in the earth:** These leaders then influence in all earth's inhabitants. Their **marriage** to the harlot is so binding that they marvel at the beast and have no place on the Book of Life (Rev. 17:8; 13:14-18). Their allegiance to the false Christ is so strong that it intoxicates them and creates in them a lust to go after false gods.

Revelation 17:3

And he carried me away into the wilderness in the spirit. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns

1. **He carried away ... in the spirit:** After this, the angel took John to a different place and gave another perspective of the harlot. This is the third of the four uses of term **in the spirit** (1:10, 4:1, 17:3, 21:10). This time the angel takes him to a wilderness.

2. **Wilderness:** This wilderness is different from the wilderness the Israel is kept safe (12:14). This wilderness alludes to the fall of Babylon (14:8; 18:2;

Isa. 21:1. The burden against the Wilderness of the Sea. As whirlwinds in the South pass through,
So it comes from the desert, from a terrible land

Jer 51:8. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain;
Perhaps she may be healed

3. **Woman sitting upon a scarlet beast:** Her position portrays the influence of the religious power over the secular leader. The scarlet beast is the same as in Rev. 13:1. Here, we read the details such as the scarlet color, seven heads, ten horns, and names of blasphemy. Rev 14:8-11 implies a close association of this beast with Babylon. Here that relationship becomes explicit. The beast controls the system politically, but the woman represents the false religion that gives spiritual basis to the system.
4. **Scarlet beast:** The beast's [scarlet](#) color matches part of the woman's clothing (17:4). Scarlet alludes to the atonement under the law

Lev 14:6. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop,
and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water

Num 19:6 And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer

Num 4:8. They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles

Here, it may refer to the counterfeit sacrifices. The scarlet color symbolized luxury and splendor which are more relevant here and in 17:4

2 Sam. 1:24. O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel

Jer 4:30. And when you are plundered, What will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; Your lovers will despise you; They will seek your life

Note its use in the life of Jesus

Mat 27:28-29. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

They mockingly put a scarlet robe on Jesus just before His crucifixion. But scarlet is also the color of sin

Isa 1:18. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool

It contrasts with the whiteness of righteousness and purity.

5. **Full of names of blasphemy:** The names of blasphemy were on the seven heads in 13:1, but here they cover the beast's whole body. Here is a secular power that blatantly and profusely profanes the name of the true God, but the ecclesiastical and religious authorities have no worry about forging a close alliance with such a ruler and kingdom and shows the depth to which apostasy can sink. This refers to the self-deification of the false Christ and his demands that his subjects worship him. As noted provisionally from 13:1, the seven heads of the beast are seven consecutive world empires throughout history, and the ten horns on the last of the heads are ten kingdoms contemporaneous with the final false Christ (17:12). The relationship between the harlot and the beast has existed throughout human history, but will reach its ultimate closeness in the days just before Christ returns.

And the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication,

1. **Clothed with purple and scarlet:** The woman's clothing and adornment is elegant, but offensive to a godly person. The two colors are so close to each other, one gospel writer used scarlet and other two purple

Mat. 27:28. And they stripped Him [Jesus] and put a scarlet robe on Him.

Mar 15:17-20. And they clothed Him with purple ... they took the purple off Him ...

John 19:2-5. And the soldiers ... put on Him a purple robe ... Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe ...

Yet they were two distinct colors

Exo 26:1. Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them

The former color denoted royalty and the latter luxury and splendor as mentioned above in 17:3.

2. **Adorned (made gold) with gold:** She adorned with layers of gold. Precious stones and pearls enhanced her attire even more. Her appearance was like the greatest queen in order to impress her customers. This is the characteristics of prostitutes of all time

Jer. 4:30. . . . Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; Your lovers will despise you; They will seek your life

This description is in sharp contrast to the appearance of the bride of the Lamb whose apparel consists of fine linen, bright and clean (19:8).

3. **Golden cup:** This adds to her royal appearance but also the depths of her degeneration

Jer 51:7. Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, That made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; Therefore the nations are deranged

From her perspective, the cup represents her own glory, but in reality they are her self-destruction as the consequences of her sins turn upon her.

4. **Abominations. . . fornication:** OT denotes abomination as ceremonial impurity arising out of idolatry

Deu 18:9. When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations

2 Ki 16:3. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel

2 Ki 23:24. Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord

Eze 16:2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

These are blasphemous activities that God detests, and the harlot's cup is full of them!

5. **Unclean things of her fornication:** This further defines those abominations. The word unclean in NT has associations with idolatry

2 Cor 6:17. Therefore, 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.'

Eph 5:5. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God

So the harlot thrives on spreading her filthy vices and corruptions by allowing earth's inhabitants to drink from her beautiful, but contaminated cup.

Revelation 17:5

and upon her forehead [was] a name written, a mystery, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

1. **Upon her forehead a name:** John also saw a label on the woman's forehead which revealed her identity. The name might have been written directly on the skin or on a band similar to the one worn by Roman prostitutes.
2. **Mystery:** What is this mystery? Tertullian is the first church father to use [Babylon](#) as a name for Rome. The [seven hills](#) mentioned in 17:9 and the reference to the great world-city in 17:18 indicates that [Babylon](#)

means Rome. However, [seven hills](#) can and probably does have a non-literal meaning (17:9). References to woman and [i] [many waters](#) (17:1), [ii] seven hills (17:2), and [iii] [wilderness](#) (17:3) indicated that the woman is not Rome, but Babylon beside the Euphrates. **Mysterion** in the NT is usually a secret to be revealed. Mystery in the NT is not something that is to be kept hidden. It is revealed to all who read the scripture with humility. The mystery is the evil about Babylon is revealed. Subsequent revelation will show her to be a great city (17:18), but also a vast system of idolatry through the centuries that the great city represents. The woman's name is [Babylon the Great . . .](#), and not [Mystery Babylon the Great](#). This gives the sense, [a name written](#), which is a mystery.

3. **Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth:** Babylon is a major theme in the scripture. Babylon was a city where false religion began (Gen. 11:1-9) that has continually plagued Israel, the church, and the world. It will once again become the world's leading city; religiously as well as commercially and politically as the end draws near. She is the originator of everything anti-Christian, including all false religions and idolatrous paganism. It is a literal city, but it is also a vast religious system that stands for everything God does not tolerate.

And I saw the woman drunken from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with great amazement, seeing her

1. **Drunken from the blood of the saints:** The attitude of the woman toward Christ is visible in her treatment of His faithful. Not only does she entice others to false religion, but oppose the the saints of the Lord Jesus (18:24).
2. **The saints and ...the witnesses of Jesus:** The word **and** does not imply two group of people. It emphasizes the characteristic of these group. The rule of the beast will create an universal environment in which the harlot will kill the saints for their faith (13:7, 15).
3. **Saints** indicates an internal purity while **witnesses** an external preaching of the gospel of Jesus. Christians should do both, and this is why the woman is against them.
4. **Drunken from the blood:**

20.1.2 The significance of the symbolism (17:6b-14)

1. **I marveled a marvel:** The reason for his great amazement is not stated. It may have been due to the sight of such unrestrained wickedness of the woman and God's permitting her to exist. Or, it may have been the contrast between the attire of the woman and beast on the one hand and a city in ruins.

Revelation 17:7

And the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast which bears her, who has the seven heads and ten horns;

1. **Why do you marvel?** Seeing John's reaction, the angel asks a rhetoric. He then proceeds to explain the meaning of the symbols.
2. **I will tell you the mystery:** He gives an extensive explanation of the beast (8-17) and a brief note of the woman (18). They are one mystery not two because of the close relations between them. The revelation concerning the beast has several parts:
 - (a) the beast himself (8),
 - (b) his heads (9-11),
 - (c) his horns (12-14),

- (d) the waters (15), and
- (e) the horns again (16-17).

3. Which bears:

The verb shows the beast's relationship to the woman which indicates that he supplies her motive force and purpose.

Revelation 17:8

the beast which you saw was and is not, and is about to ascend out of the abyss, and he departs into perdition; and those who dwell upon the earth will marvel, whose names are not written upon the book of life from the foundation of the world, seeing the beast, that he was and is not and will be present

1. **The beast:** To explain the beat the angel uses several details from chapters 11 and 13 and adds new information. In this book, the beast is either an empire or the ruler of that empire. Each head of the beast is a partial incarnation of satanic power that rules for a given period. So the beast can exist on earth without interruption in the form of seven consecutive kingdoms. But he can also be nonexistent at a given moment.

2. **Was and is not, and is about to:** It refers to the beast with the death-wound who was healed in 13:3, 12, 14. The words **is not** refer to the beast's death. And his **ascent from the abyss** means he will come to life again. He is reappearing as an eighth king in 17:11.
3. **Departs into perdition:** This refers to his future assignment to the lake of fire (19:20). To understand the past-present-future here requires a point of reference. The present state must coincide with the **death** of the beast in 13:3, 12, 14. This is his career midpoint, i.e., a time at the very beginning of chapter 13 when he comes up out of the sea. This is most probably a point at the very middle of the seventieth week, between the beast's human and superhuman careers. This point is just before the beast from the sea begins his three and a half year reign. Rev 13:1 identified the beast's future ascension from the abyss. After his death he will come to life again. When he does, he will come back in a demonic rather than a purely human form to establish his world domination. This explains why the abyss, the abode of demons (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11), is his origin. Rev 19:20 details his future departure to perdition. His destiny will be the eternal separation from God rather than an everlasting fellowship with God.
4. **Will marvel:** The cause of the marvel is change from the beast's **is-not** state to his coming resurrection (13:3). The earth-bound, God-rejecting earth-dwellers will be struck with an amazement of his invulnerability, not realizing that he will shortly be on his way to perdition.

5. **He was and is not and will be present:** This makes the beast's description a parody on the name of God (1:4).

Revelation 17:9

Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits

1. **Mind which has wisdom:** The angel continues with an invitation to John and others to listen carefully and think clearly. Similar to 13:18, these words also imply some difficulty in grasping the meaning.
2. **Seven heads are seven mountains:** The view that seven mountains refers to the city of Rome is popular, but untenable on various grounds. A preferable view is that they are seven successive empires, with the seven kings of 17:10 as heads and personifications of those empires. This view agrees with a common meaning of **mountain** or **hill** in the Bible

Dan 2:35. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth

Zec 4:7. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

This is sensible because the next phrase says the heads are also seven kings (17:10). Daniel also used similar double identification

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

Dan 7:23. Thus he said: "The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces."

Such double symbolism is rare in the Bible but not impossible as evident from Daniel. The call for special wisdom is a call to grasp this double meaning. However, Rome is one of the seven world empires is true, since the **one is** in 17:10 probably refers to the Roman empire.

3. **On which the woman sits:** This indicates once again that the woman is separate from the beast. Her position is more precise and places her on the beast's seven heads. She influences them, not by governing, but by imposing her false religious standards upon them (17:1,3,15).

And they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when it comes, it is necessary for it to remain a little [time]

1. **They are seven kings:** They represent seven literal Gentile kingdoms that follow one another in succession. Dan 7:17, 23 shows that a king can represent the kingdom ruled by him. The seven kingdoms are: [i] Egypt (Gen. 10:8-11), [ii] Assyria, [iii] Babylon, [iv] Persia, [v] Greece, [vi] Rome, and [vii] the future kingdom of the beast.
2. **Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet:** Five forms of Gentile world power had already existed by the time John wrote this book (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece). The **one which is** is the Roman empire which was in power at the time of writing. The **one which has not yet come** will be the future kingdom of the beast. The five kingdoms persecuted God's people: **Egypt**

Eze 29:2. Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt

Nineveh or Assyria

Nah 3:18. Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; Your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, And no one gathers them

Babylon

Isa 21:9. And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen! Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground."

Persia

Dan 11:2. And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece;

Greece

Dan 11:3-4. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4 And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these

The persecutor of God's people during John's lifetime was Rome. So the seven heads spans essentially the entire history of Gentile world empires.

3. **Remain for a little [time]:** The future leader and his empire will have a short life according to these words. This factor alone would eliminate the possibility of the seven kings being first-century Roman emperors.

Revelation 17:11

And the beast which was and is not, even he himself is an eighth and is [one] of the seven, and he departs into perdition

1. **He himself is an eighth and is [one] of the seven:** In some mysterious way, the beast is one of the seven heads and is at the same time the eighth head. Note that king and kingdom are used interchangeably. Here it is king because a kingdom cannot have a death-wound and then be healed. So as one of the seven, the beast is a kingdom, but as an eighth, he is the king of that kingdom who sustains the wound and ascends from the abyss after his wound (17:8). When this occurs, he is king over an eighth kingdom because his reign following his ascent from the abyss will be far more dynamic and dominant than before. This is the sense in which he is one of the seven, but also an eighth. It is clear that the eighth is an eighth king or world ruler, and not a distinctly different kingdom from the seventh head. He is distinct from his predecessors because he has received supernatural powers from Satan at his resuscitation. Yet he is also one of the seven and in

that he takes the shape of an emperor in charge of an empire. The eighth is a fusion of the raised beast and the empire over which he rules.

2. **He departs into perdition:** This king does not **fall** like the kingdoms before him, but meets his destiny at the hands of the Lord Himself.

Revelation 17:12

And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who are such ones as have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority with the beast for one hour

1. **The ten horns:** The seven heads are kingdoms, but the ten horns are kings without kingdoms at the time John wrote. The best explanation is that these are ten kings who with their kingdoms will join in a confederacy under the leadership of the beast in the final Gentile world empire. They will rule simultaneously with one another and with the beast. These are rulers who will receive their dominions in the last days

Dan 7:7, 24. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.
24 The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings

2. **Not yet received a kingdom:** They have no kingdoms, but they will receive soon to give them to the beast (7:17) and to do battle with the Lamb at Armageddon.
3. **One hour:** Indicates a very short time, much shorter than the beast himself where he got 42 months (13:5). Some time after he begins his three and a half year superhuman reign, he will appoint these kings with power to rule, and they will reign until the war with the Lamb at His return (17:14).

Revelation 17:13

These have one mind [purpose], and they give their power and authority to the beast

1. **They have one mind gnomen:** The support of the ten kings to the beast is unanimous. Their unity of purpose here relates to warfare with the Lamb (17:14). The word gnomen occurs elsewhere when Paul exhorts the Corinthian church for unity

1 Cor. 1:10. Now I plead with you ...that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment gnomen.
2. **They give their power and authority:** The present tense they give points to future when they will receive their kingdoms and therefore have power and authority to give.

These will make war with the Lamb; and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords with Him [will overcome them].”

1. **These will make war:** The enmity of the ten kings toward God is seen in the battle. The unity or the purpose of these ten kings is to fight against God. This is the same battle of 16:14 and 19:19-21.
2. **Lord of lords and King of kings:** Jesus is sovereign over all others who rule in the earth. This is attested several times in the Scripture

1 Tim. 6:15. which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords

Deu. 10:17. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe

Dan. 2:47. The king answered Daniel, and said, Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a reveler of secrets, since you could reveal this secret

Psa. 136:3. Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever

3. **Called, elect:** He will win along with His faithful. Jesus said in

Mat. 22:14. Many are called, but few are chosen

Not all who are called are chosen, but all the chosen are first called

2 Pet. 1:10. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,

4. **Faithful:** Faithful indicates the fulfillment of the human response by this select group. The faithfulness of the saints is the climax of the calling and election by God.

20.1.3 The judgment of the great harlot (17:15-18)

Having completed the detailed discussion of the beast, the angel is now telling how the harlot will meet her end.

And he says to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues

1. **The waters:** Angel now explain the meaning of **the waters** of 17:1. Usually **water** in Revelation means literal water. This is an exceptional case and the angel himself explains the figurative meaning. In the OT, water is a common symbol for people

Isa. 8:7. Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them, The waters of the River, strong and mighty The king of Assyria and all his glory . . .
2. **Harlot sits:** She controls the lifestyle of the mixed populations of the world through their voluntary submission to her. The beast also had similar authority over them (13:7).
3. **peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues:** The fourfold listing is to describe humanity. This highlights the massive scale of the harlot's recruitment of victims. The fourfold description of people is a common pattern used throughout Revelation to denote universal, worldwide groups — applying equally to both the faithful and the rebellious.

And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot, and will make her desolated and naked, and will devour her flesh, and will bum her up with fire

1. **These will hate the harlot:** Eventually the ten horns and the beast will turn against the false religious system. This sudden betrayal is surprising. False religion used the beast to promote her cause, but suddenly the attraction turns to hatred. In the end, Satan's kingdom will divide against itself, signaling that its demise is near

Mark 3:26. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end

Although the immediate cause of the hatred is not revealed, but it was prophesied in OT

Ezk. 16:37. Surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness

Ezk. 23:22. . . . thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will stir up your lovers against you, From whom you have alienated yourself, And I will bring them against you from every side

2. **Desolated . . . naked:** The first act of hatred against Babylon will be a plundering of her wealth. Then, they expose her moral corruption publicly. She will lose her rich adornment (17:4) and former spiritual power over her lovers.
3. **Will devour her flesh:** This is what wild beasts do to corpses, and it indicates utter destruction of man on the earth

1 Kings 21:23-24. And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field

2 Kings 9:36. Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel;

Mic. 3:3 Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, Break their bones, And chop them in pieces Like meat for the pot, Like flesh in the caldron;

Zep. 3:3. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; Her judges are evening wolves That leave not a bone till morning

4. **Will bum her up with fire:** The wording of this destiny comes from a legal formula condemning those who had committed detestable fornication

Lev. 21:9. The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot . . . She shall be burned with fire

Jos. 7:15. Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel

It speaks the utter destruction of a system of false religion that will have reached its peak in the days just before its destruction The imagery like [devouring flesh](#) and [burning with fire](#) describes the complete, violent end of this false religion right at the peak of its global influence.

Revelation 17:17

For God has put into their hearts to put into practice His purpose, and to put into practice one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled

1. **God has put:** The immediate cause of the devastating friction among former allies is unknown, but the ultimate cause is known. The sovereign purpose of God is behind this internal strife within the kingdom of evil. God has put into the hearts and minds of the ten kings and their leader to turn against the religious structure which they feel no longer serves a useful purpose for them. God has put this thoughts into their minds

Neh. 7:5. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy . . .

Jer. 32:40. . . . I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me

Heb. 8:10. 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 . . .

God uses the forces of evil for His purposes of judgment. He used Babylon to judge Israel

Jer. 25:9-11. behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolation

He also uses enemies to destroy themselves

1 Sam. 14:20. Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion

The ten kings and the beast are unconscious that they are carrying out God's design. They think they are fulfilling their own plans, but in reality they are blindly fulfilling the divine counsel

2. **One purpose:** God made them to agree to give their kingdom to the beast. It is a sinful act from their part to party with beast to war against the Lamb. However, God is not the author of this sin. In the outworking of His plan for this creation God allowed the existence of evil, but He is not in any sense the author of evil

Jas. 1:13-14. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

3. **Until the words of God will be fulfilled:** The words of God includes all the prophecies of last events until the defeat of the beast (10:7). God's word dictate all the end time events which includes the control of the world by the beast.

And the woman whom you saw is the great city which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth.”

1. **Woman whom you saw is the great city:** After telling the destruction of the harlot and unity of evil force behind this, the angel reveals the identity of the woman riding on the beast. It is better to see this woman as the anti-Christian religious system of the end days that will seduce the world away from the true faith. Many OT allusions to Babylon in Revelation 17-18 indicate her tie to a certain geographical city, yet her primary function is not political, but religious. She stands for an ideology associated with the political institution of the beast. Examples includes:

Jer. 51:13. O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your covetousness

Rev. 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,

Jer. 51:7. Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, That made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; Therefore the nations are deranged

Rev. 17:2,4. with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication

Jer. 51:29. And the land will tremble and sorrow; For every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, To make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant

Rev. 17:16. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire

Rev. 18:8. 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

Isa. 47:5,7. Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you shall no longer be called The Lady of Kingdoms. 7 And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' So that you did not take these things to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them.

Rev. 17:17. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled

Rev. 18:7,8. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' 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

Jer. 51:8. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be healed

Isa. 21:9. And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!" Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground."

Isa. 13:21. But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there, And wild goats will caper there

Rev. 18:2. 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!

Jer. 50:8. Move from the midst of Babylon, Go out of the land of the Chaldeans; And be like the rams before the flocks

Jer. 51:6,45. Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; He shall recompense her. 45 My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord

Rev. 18:4. And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues

Jer. 51:9. We would have healed Babylon, But she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies

Rev. 18:5. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities

Jer. 50:15. Shout against her all around; She has given her hand, Her foundations have fallen, Her walls are thrown down; For it is the vengeance of the Lord. Take vengeance on her. As she has done, so do to her

Jer. 51:24,49. And I will repay Babylon And all the inhabitants of Chaldea For all the evil they have done In Zion in your sight,” says the Lord. 49 As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, So at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall

Rev. 18:6. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her

Jer. 51:25. Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys all the earth,” says the Lord. “And I will stretch out My hand against you, Roll you down from the rocks, And make you a burnt mountain

Rev. 18:8. 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

Jer. 51:63,64. Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. 64 Then you shall say, ‘Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.’”

Rev. 18:21. 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

2. **has a kingdom over the kings of the earth:** Although some try to identify this city as Jerusalem, Rome, or figurative of an ideal city etc are flawed with many reasons. Best explanation is Babylon on the Euphrates. The OT prophecies of Babylon's destruction in Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 51 are yet unfulfilled and are awaiting the future Day of the Lord for that fulfillment

Isa 13:6. Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty

The Babylon is not only a system, but also has a physical kingdom as the front end. further, its location fits in terms of politics, geography, accessibility, commercial facilities, and central to the world trade. In the end time, this city will gain prominence, politically, religiously, and commercially, for some time, and then will be destroyed.

20.2 Commercial Babylon Destroyed (18:1–24)

The angel here shows the decline of the Babylon's economic prosperity (18:9-19). She will become desolate, demons will occupy (18:2) and all social life will end (18:21-23). Main divisions of this portion:

1. Introduction as an announcement of the judgment (18:1-3),
2. Voice from heaven predicts the fall (18:4-20), and
3. Conclusion as a second announcement of judgment (18:21-24).
4. These events will be followed by heavenly praise to God over the fall of Babylon (19:1-8).

The introduction (1-3) and conclusion (21-24) give two fundamental reasons for God's judgment of the city: political self-interest and materialism (18:3, 23). Throughout this chapter John varies his grammatical tenses from present to future to past.

20.2.1 First angelic pronouncement of judgment (18:1-3)

Revelation 18:1

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory

1. **After these things:** It denotes the introduction of something new, a new beginning and a new set of circumstances. Note that the city in chapters 17 and 18 are the same, because:
 - (a) both have the name **Babylon the great** (17:5; 18:2),
 - (b) both are guilty of fornication (17:1, 2, 4, 5, 16; 18:3),
 - (c) both influenced kings and people (17:2; 18:3),
 - (d) both have same destiny to be burned with fire (17:16; 18:8, 9, 18), [v] both will be utterly desolate (17:16; 18:17, 19), [vi] both looks like a harlot (17:4; 18:16), and [vii] both are responsible for the martyrdom of the faithful (17:6; 18:20, 24).

However, the major guilt according to chapter 17 is due to the city's **abominations** (17:4, 5), but according to chapter 18 it is her sensuality associated with **luxury** (18:3, 7, 9). Unique aspects of this chapter includes:

- (a) close interaction with the merchants (18:3, 11, 15, 17, 23),
- (b) clear attitude of arrogance (18:7),
- (c) economic prosperity (18:11-14, 19), and
- (d) deep lamentation over her destruction (18:9-11, 15-16, 19).

While Babylon represents a religious system in chapter 17, it represents an economic system in chapter 18. However, in both chapters, the Babylon operates independently of and in opposition to the true God. Collapse of the city leaves huge vacuum in both religious and economic realms. These things will mark the deterioration and subsequent defeat of the political system of the beast (the anti-Christ) at the coming of the Lamb (19:11-21).

2. **Another angel:** This angel is different from the angel in 17:1, 7, 15. This angel announces the doom of Babylon and he resembles those came for special missions (10:1; 20:1). Some identify this angel as Christ because of the descriptions like [i] [the earth was illuminated by his glory](#), [ii] [great authority](#), and [iii] [coming down out of heaven](#). However, the designation [another angel](#) clearly proves that this an angel and not Christ.
3. **Earth was illuminated by his glory:** The angel's impact on the earth is significant. Radiance of light may be due to his coming from the heaven very similar to the face of Moses

Exo. 34:30. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him

or to the restored temple

Eze. 43:2. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory

or to the New Jerusalem (21:23; 22:5).

Revelation 18:2

And he cried out with a strong voice saying, "Babylon the great has fallen, has fallen, and has become the habitation of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit and a prison of every unclean bird and a prison of every unclean and hated beast,

1. **He cried out with a strong voice:** Recalls the similar voices in 14:8 and indicates that it is impossible for anyone to ignore him.
2. **Babylon the great has fallen:** The grammar indicates the certainty of the future fall. These words reminds of the fall in 539 B.C. when Persia invaded. This verse similar to 14:8 and alludes to OT prophecies But, the ultimate fulfillment will be at the end of world history.

Isa. 13:19-22. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It will never be inhabited, Nor will it be settled from generation to generation; Nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there. 21 But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there, And wild goats will caper there. 22 The hyenas will howl in their citadels, And jackals in their pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, And her days will not be prolonged"

Isa. 21:9. And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!" Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground"

Isa. 47:1-15. "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called Tender and delicate . . . Thus shall they be to you With whom you have labored, Your merchants from your youth; They shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you

Jer. 51:1-60. Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will raise up against Babylon . . . 8 Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be

healed ... 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon

3. **Babylon:** Some understand it as purely symbolic of the world city of the satanic system of evil that has corrupted the world's history. This cannot be since: [i] the destruction is prophesied for future, [ii] Babylon has never undergone the destruction prophesied for her in the OT

Isa. 47:11. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly

Isa. 51:8a. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, And the worm will eat them like wool

Babylon will rise to its greatest heights, both in idolatry (17) and in luxury (18). Babylon of the future, therefore, will be the center for both false religion and world economic prosperity.

4. **Habitation of demons:** The city is utterly deserted. The demons or wild beasts will occupy there

Isa. 31:21. But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses will be full of owls;
Ostriches will dwell there, And wild goats will caper there

5. **Prison of every unclean spirit and birds:** It refers to a place where the unclean spirits and birds, especially the scavenging birds, are kept safe but against their will

Isa. 34:11. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. And He shall stretch out over it. The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness

Jer. 50:39. Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell there with the jackals, And the ostriches shall dwell in it. It shall be inhabited no more forever, Nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation

This completes the forecast of the city's utter desolation after its predicted fall.

Revelation 18:3

because of the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations have drunk, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich because of the power of her wantonness.”

1. **Because:** The cause of the city's fall is due to her prostitution with the kings of the earth and luxurious immorality with the merchants of the earth.
2. **Wine of ...her fornication:** This indicates the source from which the kings have drunk. The passionate luxury and materialism of the great city have intoxicated all the nations. The three groups [i] [all the nations](#),

[ii] [the kings of the earth](#), and [iii] [the merchants of the earth](#) comprises the whole of the world's population. Everyone has united in an ungodly union with the great city. Hence, mankind is universally morally bankrupt and God has chosen this time to act. The merchants will suffer more than the kings with the fall of the city, because the kings will have their political power left. They have only lost a partner in fornication, but the merchants will lose everything. Commerce and trade is the major subject of the remainder of the chapter. The fornication of all the nations and of the kings is that the city has promoted herself by instilling an unquestioning faith in her supposedly inexhaustible resources, thereby discouraging any sense of a deeper need for God.

3. **Merchant:** The word for merchants carry the meaning that one who is on a journey to conduct business (18:11, 15, 23, Mat 13:45).
4. **Power (dynamis):** This implies the luxury or quantity of wealth of Babylon is the actual power that has worked to enrich the traders.
5. **Wantonness (Strenos):** The noun appears in the NT only here, but the related verb appears in 18:7, 9. It means insolent luxury, self-indulgence with accompanying arrogance and vicious exercise of strength, exuberance of strength which is the flower of pride, or the impudence of wealth, wantonness, and unruliness arising from the fullness of bread

1 Tim. 5:11. But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry

Deu. 32:15. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! then he forsook God who made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation

The connection of fornication and luxury in this verse indicates that Babylon's fornication consists not only of idolatry, but also includes her pride in excessive wealth. Replace religion often has gone hand in hand with the accumulation and abusive use of luxury.

20.2.2 Prediction of a voice from heaven that Babylon will fall (18:4-20)

This prediction has three parts: [i] a call for God's people to come out of Babylon (4-8), [ii] laments by the kings of the earth, the merchants, and the sea people (9-19), and [iii] a note of heavenly rejoicing (20).

Revelation 18:4

And I heard another voice out of heaven saying, "Come out of her, My people, that you not share with her sins, and that you might not receive of her plagues

1. **I heard another voice out of heaven:** John heard a call to the people of God. This is not the voice of God or of Christ, but of an angel speaking in the name of God as evident from the use of third person (God) in the next verse. This call reminds the call to leave Babylon and a warning to be separated from her wickedness

Isa. 48:20. Go forth from Babylon! ... [for] The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob!

Jer. 51:6. Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; He shall recompense her

Zec. 2:6-7. "Up, up! Flee from the land of the north," says the LORD ... "Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon"

Gen. 12:1. Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you

Gen. 19:12. Then the men said to Lot, "... whomever you have in the city take them out of this place!

Num. 16:26. And he [Moses] spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins"

Mat. 24:16. then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains

2. **Come out of her, My people:** The call to come out is not only to leave the literal city, but also to reject the false religious and commercial system which the city represents: idolatry, self-sufficiency, reliance on luxury, and violence against human life. This call is valid even today, though not literally, from the spiritual Babylon which represents the world system that is opposing the Lord. My people refers to the faithful, primarily those who are alive at the peak of the beast's kingdom. This also implies that saints will be there on the earth even to the very end. If you think you belong the 'My people' then call to come out is also applicable to you!
3. **That you do not share with her sins:** Warning is against sharing with the sins of the city. Failure to separate will result in sharing with the plagues that is impending. Note that, John placed the plagues in the future after having spoken of the city's destruction as past (18:2) is to be understood as poetic reverse insertion in which chronological sequence is not a governing consideration. As noted early, chapter 18-19 is an elaboration of the last bowl judgment. Hence, the call to come can be understood to given before the enactment of these judgments. Therefore, this is a call to separate from the evil system and receive protection from God's wrath.

Because her sins have joined unto heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteous acts

1. **Because her sins have reached/joined (ekollethesan):** Amplifying the reason for God's people to depart from Babylon, as suggested by this word, is her sins have now grown together into a big mass. Note that it not that Babylon's sins are joined to heaven, but that they have grown so much that it now reaches to heaven. This alludes several OT passages

Gen. 11:3-4. Then they said to one another, "... Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth"

Jer. 51:9. We would have healed Babylon, But she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies

Gen. 18:20-21. And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see ...
2. **God has remembered her unrighteous acts:** It is prophetic language that God will not ignore the iniquities or crimes of Babylon. These crimes or **unrighteous acts** are used in a legal sense

Acts 18:14. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes . . .

Acts 24:20. . . .let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council

It is an expression of appeal to the justice of God which implies that He must punish Babylon. Hence, His people must distance themselves from the city and the system as far as they can.

Revelation 18:6

Give back to her as even she has given back, and double the double things according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double;

1. **Give back or render to her:** The call is to execute justice of God which is in line with **lex talionis** of the OT

Jer. 51:24. "And I will repay Babylon And all the inhabitants of Chaldea For all the evil they have done In Zion in your sight," says the LORD

Psa. 28:4. Give them according to their deeds, And according to the wickedness of their endeavors; Give them according to the work of their hands; Render to them what they deserve

Psa. 137:8. O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!

NT also teaches similarly

Mat. 7:2. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you

Gal. 6:7-8. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life

Rom. 12:19. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord

This does not mean a disciple should repay evil. Instead we should be a blessing to the persecutors and we should never repay evil for evil

Mat. 5:44. . . . bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

Rom 12:14,17. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men

1 The. 5:15. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all

2 Tim. 4:14. Alexander the copper smith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works

1 Pet. 3:9. not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing

Why we should execute vengeance is because God alone can judge the human motives correctly. God alone can implement the law of retaliation with perfect justice.

2. **As even she has given back:** This may refer to the persecution of saints by Babylon (18:24; 19:2) more than the corruption of the nations. This is not a prayer for personal vengeance by the persecuted saints.

It is a divine response to the wicked persons who have passed the point of no return. This exhortation is apparently (ironically) to the beast and his allies who will destroy Babylon according to the counsel of God (17:16-17). This is confirmed by the similar result of the judgment: the burning of the city (17:16; 18:8, 9, 18). Note that even though vengeance is the prerogative of God alone, God also has the right to choose the agents of destruction

Deu. 32:35. ... Vengeance is Mine ...

Rom. 12:19. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves ... for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord

Heb. 10:30. For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord ...

God used Moses, Joshua, Cyrus, Deborah, and Gideon

Exo. 14:26. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen"

Exo. 17:13. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword

Isa. 45:1. " Thus says the Lord to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held To subdue nations before him . . .

3. **Repay double:** The beast and his supporters moved suddenly and unexpectedly to destroy the city and its commercial as well as its religious pre-eminence. Repay double means to repay in full and is according to the law of God

Exo. 22:4. If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double

Isa. 40:2. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem . . . for she has received from the Lord's hand Double for all her sins"

Jer. 17:18. Let them be ashamed who persecute me . . . destroy them with double destruction!

This is true even in the case of restoration

Job 42:10. And the Lord restored Job's losses . . . Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before

Isa. 61:7. Instead of your shame you shall have double honor . . . their land they shall possess double . . .

Zec. 9:12. Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you

4. **According to her works:** This is consistently the basis for God's future judgment of mankind

Psa. 62:12. Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; For You render to each one according to his work

Pro. 24:12. . . . He who keeps your soul . . . will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

Isa. 59:18. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay. . .

Jer. 17:10. I, the LORD, search the heart, test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings

Rom. 2:6. who "will render to each one according to his deeds"

1 Pet. 1:17. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear

5. **In the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double:** The cup that Babylon used to seduce others has now become the instrument of her own punishment (14:8, 10; 17:4; 18:3). She receives back exact punishment for her wrongdoings (14:10).

Revelation 18:7

in as many things as she has glorified herself and become wanton, give so much torment and sorrow to her. Because in her heart she says, 'I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and I will in no way see sorrow';

1. **Glorified herself (edoxasen):** The first sin of Babylon is self-glorification. This stems from pride that prohibits giving glory to God.
2. **Lived luxuriously (estreniasen):** The second sin is finding satisfaction in luxury. It denotes a luxurious lifestyle accompanied by discourtesy, arrogance, self-indulgence, ruthless exercise of strength, and unruliness

Isa. 3:16. Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing as they go, Making a jingling with their feet

Pro. 29:23. A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor

Luke 1:51. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts

Luke 14:11. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"

3. **Same measure:** The principle of matching the punishment to the crime is a constantly affirmed scriptural principle.
4. **Torment:** Intense suffering will replace the luxurious lifestyle, and the gloom will replace laughter. The word **torment** is the usual word for mourning over the dead

Gen. 27:41. So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob"

Amos 8:10. I will turn your feasts into mourning, And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, And baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, And its end like a bitter day

5. **Says in heart:** One who examines the motives has found a self-centeredness that is almost equal to self-deification. Meditations of the heart are like an open book to Him. The attitude of Babylon is essentially there is no other God than her. This is the peak of wickedness

Psa. 10:4-13. The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts. 11 He has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see." 13 Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, "You will not require an account"

Psa. 14:1. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good

Psa. 53:1. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none who does good

Eze. 28:2-9. 2 "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god

6. **I sit as a queen:** Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh were noted for such boasting in the OT

Isa. 47:7-9. And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' So that you did not take these things to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them. 8 "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children'; 9 But these two things shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments

Eze. 27:3. and say to Tyre, 'You who are situated at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coast lands, thus says the Lord GOD: "O Tyre, you have said, 'I am perfect in beauty'

Eze. 28:2. "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god

Zep 2:15. This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, "I am it, and there is none besides me." How has she become a desolation, A place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist

This, the third sin of Babylon is an arrogant self-confidence

Isa 47:5,7,8. "Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you shall no longer be called The Lady of Kingdoms. 7 And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' So that you did not take these things to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them. 8 "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children'

It is a self-sufficiency that prompts one to think that he is beyond the reach of any punishment. Such an overweening presumption will draw the wrath of God.

7. **Not a widow... see no sorrow:** The fourth sin of Babylon is the avoidance of suffering. She rejects the possibility of widowhood and sorrow. The claim of self-sufficiency is a clear reminder of the attitude of the church in Laodicea (3:17).

Revelation 18:8

on account of this in one day her plagues will come, death and sorrow and famine, and she shall be burned up with fire; because the Lord God who judges her is strong

1. **On account of this:** Shows the cause and effect. Babilon's arrogance seen in the previous verse resulted in the sudden and utter destruction.

2. **In one day:** More than the literal duration suddenness of the destruction is viewed here.
3. **Plagues will come:** Her resulting plagues are direct, poetic reversals of her former luxuries: [death](#) answers her false security, [sorrow](#) replaces her reveling, and [famine](#) replaces her abundance.
4. **She shall be burned up with fire:** Babylon will suffer a sudden, catastrophic destruction by fire, rather than a gradual decline. This dual imagery of desolation and burning heavily parallels Old Testament prophecies of destruction.
5. **Because the Lord God . . . is strong:** The speed and severity of this judgment are ultimately rooted in the supreme strength of God. By placing the word [strong](#) at the forefront, the text emphasizes that Babylon, the [strong city](#), is entirely powerless against the might of her Creator.
6. **Lord God who judges:** While God may use earthly agents to carry out the punishment, the text serves as a reminder that He is the ultimate judge overseeing Babylon's fall. This reality reinforcing that God's divine authority is the true source of the judgment

[Jer. 50:34. Their Redeemer is strong; The Lord of hosts is His name. He will thoroughly plead their case, That He may give rest to the land, And disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon](#)

“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

1. **The kings:** The angel describes a series of laments from [kings](#), [merchants](#), and [sea people](#), starting with the kings weeping and mourning in despair over the smoldering city. The text uniquely uses shifting verb tenses — future for the kings, present for the merchants, and past for the sea people — to outline these three waves of mourning.
2. **The kings of the earth . . . weep and lament for her:** These grieving kings are a wider group of rulers distinct from the ten kings who actually destroy Babylon; they keep their distance out of political expediency while mourning the sudden loss of their power. The order of the mourners and their specific reasons for sadness (loss of power (18:10), markets (18:11,16), and trade (18:19)) directly parallel Ezekiel’s prophecies regarding the fall of Tyre (Ezk. 26:15–18; Ezk. 27:36; Ezk. 27:29–36).
3. **Committed fornication and lived luxuriously:** The kings are condemned for a twofold offense: committing “fornication” with Babylon and indulging in her excessive luxury, showing that sharing in her wealth was inseparable from their spiritual compromise.

4. **When they see the smoke of her burning:** The sight of Babylon's smoke triggers the kings' misery. This reminds us of the historic biblical destructions of Sodom, Tyre, and Edom. Although Babylon faces multiple plagues, the text emphasizes that fire is the primary and final instrument of her ruin.

Revelation 18:10

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.'

1. **Standing at a distance for feat of her torment:** The kings watch Babylon burn from a safe distance, illustrating both their helplessness to save the city and their fear of suffering the same fate. The fact that these rulers survive to witness the fire demonstrates that Babylon's fall is not the absolute end of history, as they are left to assemble for a final conflict later.
2. **Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!** The kings' lament begins with a repeated **woe**, which is grammatically structured here as an exclamation of profound, mournful sorrow. This grief marks the shattering of a grand illusion; the rulers realize that Babylon's perceived ability to defy God as **the strong city** was ultimately hollow claim.

3. **For in one hour your judgment has come:** The temporal phrase bwin one hour — which is also echoed by the merchants and sea-people—emphasizes the shocking and immediate suddenness of Babylon’s destruction. This concept of an abrupt, immediate downfall draws directly from the prophetic themes found in OT

Jer. 51:8-9. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be healed. 9 We would have healed Babylon, But she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies

Revelation 18:11

“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

1. The merchants cry deeply over Babylon’s destruction because they have lost all their customers and profits. They mourn the loss of extreme wealth, which had blinded them to their own greed and cruelty. This highlights just how intensely and overwhelmingly sad the merchants are.
2. It is deeply ironic that these merchants, who belonged to a system that once stopped others from trading, can now no longer sell their own goods. They had grown incredibly rich by supplying Babylon with the worldly goods that ungodly people desired.

3. The wide variety of luxury goods they sold is broken down into seven categories in the following verses. These categories range from jewelry, fine clothing, and exotic spices to livestock and even human slaves.
4. These list of luxury goods that were common during first century when John was writing this. However, these items serve as timeless symbols of wealth that are also seen in older historical writings.

Revelation 18:12

merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

1. This verse lists the specific luxury items that make up the first three categories of the merchants' trade. These goods include precious metals, fine fabrics, and rare materials like ivory and marble.
2. The first category features precious metals and gems, such as gold from Spain and jewels imported from India. Pearls were especially prized and became the ultimate symbol of the empire's growing obsession with extreme wealth.

3. The second category focuses on rare, highly expensive fabrics like delicate Egyptian linen and imported Chinese silk. It also includes clothing colored with incredibly costly purple and scarlet dyes, which were worn as major status symbols by the rich and powerful.
4. The third category highlights lavish materials used for furniture and buildings, such as rare fragrant woods, ivory, bronze, and imported marble. Wealthy men would spend massive fortunes on these exotic materials just to decorate their extravagant homes.

Revelation 18:13

and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

1. The fourth category of merchandise features expensive spices and perfumes, like cinnamon and frankincense, imported from faraway lands. These rare fragrances were highly valued for religious rituals, lavish banquets, personal cosmetics, and the funerals of the rich.
2. The fifth category focuses on food, highlighting how wealthy landowners profited immensely from producing wine and olive oil. It also mentions the massive amounts of fine flour and wheat imported by ship to feed the city, a practice that caused resentment throughout the rest of the empire.

3. The sixth category covers livestock and transportation, including cattle for work and sheep bred to produce high-quality wool. It also includes horses and expensive decorated chariots, which wealthy citizens used for racing and luxury travel.
4. The final category deals with the trafficking of human beings, using the terms **bodies** and **souls of men**. Even though different Greek grammar is used for these terms, both simply refer to the buying and selling of human slaves.
5. Placing slaves at the very end of the list powerfully emphasizes the horrific brutality and lack of human value that built the city's wealth. Enslaved people were treated as mere livestock to serve in wealthy households, brothels, and brutal entertainment arenas.
6. Although the luxury items were from John's time as examples, this prophecy points to a future society that will be even more obsessed with extreme materialism. When this corrupt, greedy system finally collapses, the people who worshipped its wealth will be left with nothing but deep sorrow.

Revelation 18:14

The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

1. This verse shifts its grammar to show the merchants continuing their sad lament, speaking directly to the ruined city. Although some think this verse seems out of place and belongs later in the text, this sudden change in speaking style is normal for the author's free-flowing writing style.
2. The text uses a unique Greek word for **the fruit that your soul longed** represent the rich, satisfying indulgences the city deeply craved. The sudden loss of these highly desired luxuries is the main cause of the merchants' immense emotional pain.
3. The text uses specific words to describe the extravagant food and splendid clothing that have now completely perished. Using the strongest possible negative phrasing available in the Greek language (**has gone from you**), the verse makes it painfully clear that these cherished luxuries will never return.

Revelation 18:15

The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

1. The verse returns to the deep sadness of the merchants, who are mourning over the loss of the luxurious and splendid goods they once sold. Their intense grief is driven by the fact that trading with this ruined city is exactly what made them so incredibly wealthy.

2. Like the kings mentioned earlier, the merchants stand far away from the destruction because they are terrified of suffering the same agonizing punishment. Instead of rushing in to help save the city, they selfishly watch from a safe distance, continuously crying and mourning their loss.

Revelation 18:16

and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!

1. The merchants mourn the ruined city by describing it as a wealthy woman dressed in lavish, expensive clothing and jewelry. While the kings mourned the city's lost power, the merchants focus on its lost wealth, showing that each group only cares about how the destruction hurts their own selfish interests.
2. The description of the city's extravagant clothing closely matches an earlier symbol of a corrupt woman, using the exact same luxury goods the merchants used to sell. While pure materials like linen and jewels are used later in the text to describe holy things, the colors purple and scarlet are deliberately left out because they are tied to evil.

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

1. The merchants finish their mournful song by lamenting that such massive wealth was completely destroyed in just a single hour. The text uses a specific grammatical tense to emphasize that this future devastation is an absolute certainty.
2. The focus then shifts to a new group of mourners: the people who travel and make their living on the sea. This imagery best fits a coastal city with its own seaport, and it heavily mirrors older biblical prophecies about the fall of the city of Tyre.
3. This diverse group of sea-people includes ship pilots, traveling passengers, and everyday sailors. It also covers anyone else who relies on the ocean for their livelihood, such as fishermen and pearl divers.
4. Just like the kings and merchants before them, these sea workers stand terrified at a safe distance to watch the city’s destruction. The author switches to the past tense here simply to make the dramatic scene feel more vivid and action-packed.

Revelation 18:18

and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

1. The sea-workers cry out in deep sorrow and awe as they watch the smoke rising from the burning city. Seeing the city's fiery destruction firsthand triggers their mournful song, echoing the reactions of the kings before them.
2. The sailors ask what other city could ever compare to this one, emphasizing that its massive wealth was entirely unmatched. The unspoken answer is that no other city compares, proving that the ultimate symbol of human greed and materialism has been destroyed forever.

Revelation 18:19

"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 made desolate.'

1. The sea-workers throw dust on their heads as a traditional, ancient sign of deep grief and anxiety over the city's ruin. This dramatic physical reaction of mourning directly mirrors older biblical stories of destruction.

2. They continuously weep and mourn just like the merchants did, lamenting the loss of the "great city." Their intense sadness is driven by the fact that the city's massive treasures and spending power were exactly what made the ship owners so rich.
3. The sea-people mourn that this incredible source of wealth was completely wiped out so quickly. They are left devastated because their entire livelihood and income have permanently gone up in flames.

20.2.3 Second angelic pronouncement of judgment on Babylon (18:21–24)

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