

Day 364

Revelation; Bowls and Babylon

Revelation 14.1 – 19.5

Rev.14.1-5 John now sees Christ as the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and the twelve by twelve thousand redeemed already referred to earlier, from the tribes of Israel. The link here is that this is the ancient city of David, and these are those redeemed out of the old covenant people of God. He hears a thunderous waterfall of harps, accompanying the new song which the Jewish remnant sing, which only they know, and which only they can learn. These are sexually pure, and kept for God. Like the tribe of Levi before them, they are specially dedicated to God and the Lamb for their service.

Rev.14.6-8 An angelic being is flying between heaven and earth and broadcasting the good news to the whole world. He warns of judgement and calls for worship of God the Creator. A second angel is prophetically announcing the collapse of the ruling power, here called Babylon, looking back to the time of Israel's exile, but implying the Roman Empire which currently holds sway. Since adultery in prophetic writing indicates congress with the non-gods, it can be deduced that Rome has spread its idolatry across the nations, pictured as the wine drunk to excess at many of its idol feasts.

Rev.14.9-13 A third angelic being denounces all who worship the Beast *and his image* (Greek τὸ θεῖον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ *to theérion kai teen eikóna avtóu*) pointing to the identification of the Beast with the Caesar, whose worship was enforced throughout the Empire by the erection of statues or images of him. To act thus is blasphemous, and brings hefty retribution for those involved. Those who follow Christ will be called in those times to patiently endure the pressure (Greek ὑπομονή *ypomonée*, remaining upright under stress,) to worship the Beast and to resist compromise. An encouragement to them is given in knowing that their death is in God's hands, confirmed by the Spirit who brings them peace after turmoil and recompense for their faithfulness.

Seven Last Plagues

Rev.14.14-16 Jesus spoke of the harvesting of the earth at the end of this age, (cf Matt.13.39) and now that time comes, with the son of man reaping and harvesting the earth with His sickle.

Rev.14.17-20 As this is going on, an angel comes out of the newly revealed Temple of God's presence, with a sickle, and is instructed by another angel to gather the grapes, which when it is done, are cast into the winepress of God's anger. This is a terrifying picture of the bloodshed of the earth, with blood flowing out of the press up to the height of a horse's neck for miles around. It is highly visionary, and cannot be taken too literally, for it may well depict the whole catastrophic tale of human war and violence which continues until the age is ended.

Rev.15.1 The outpouring of God's anger culminates in seven final plagues (Greek πληγή *pleghée*, plague or whip-stroke.) Administered by angels, they exhaust God's righteous anger on the age of broken earth.

Rev.15.2-4 Before the seven plagues are released, John sees the gathering beside a crystal lake mixed with fire, of the overcomers, those who refused compromise with the Beast, now playing and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, a triumphant expression of praise declaring God's greatness and justice, His awesome holiness and His worthiness for all nations to come and bow before Him. The song bears the hallmarks of Hebrew poetry, with its echoing of themes one after another in parallelism. This may therefore well be an early example of Christian hymnology, or a hymn taken on by the believers from the Jewish tradition.

Rev.15.5-16.1 John looks into heaven once more, into what he now calls 'the shrine of the tent of the testimony', (Greek ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου *o naós tees skeenées tou martyriou*, referring to the ark which is housed there.) From here come seven angels who are given seven bowls full of God's anger to pour out in judgement. There are definite parallels between these plagues and the plagues upon Egypt before the Exodus.

Rev.16.2- 7 The first plague brings boils, the second turns the sea to blood and kills all life in it, the third does the same to the rivers, as Moses did to the Nile.

There seems to be now a moment of reminder of why this terrible thing is happening – it is because of the murder and violence perpetrated against the people of God; the *right-wiser* of all the earth is doing right.

Rev 16.8-11 Extreme heat follows the pouring out of the fourth plague, which burns people and provokes them to curse God – acknowledging Him, yet not bowing to Him. The fifth covers the earth in darkness, in which men chew their tongues in pain, a graphic phrase indeed, yet still refusing to honour or turn to God.

Rev.16.12-16 The sixth plague is poured on the great separating border between the Empire and the Parthians, the Euphrates. It dries up the water, and opens the way for the powers from the east to pour in and destroy the land. Frogs now make an appearance, as they embody evil spirits which go out from the dragon, the beast and his prophet to muster the armies against the eastern onslaught. The spirits do wonders which impress the nations' governments to come in their support.

The day of the Lord is coming, and Christ breaks in with warning of His return, as unexpected as thief, with exhortation to be ready for the moment.

The armies meet in John's vision from east and west at the Plain of Jezreel, the ancient theatre of battle which marks the pass from east to west of invading armies. (cf. Judges 5.19, 2 Kgs.23.29) The place mentioned is a hill called Har Megiddo (Hebrew **הַר מְגִדּוֹ**) in Greek called Armageddon (Greek Ἀρμαγεδών) ; its name means 'Hill of assembly' 'Hill of gashes', and it can be visited today, overlooking the wide valley below so symbolic of conflict in the world of men.

Rev.16.17-21 The seventh plague-bowl is now emptied and earthquake splits Babylon in three, in the midst of unprecedented, prodigious storm activity in the heavens. Across the nations, cities break up and collapse. Islands disappear and mountains fall – the

full draught of God's anger is released in utter cataclysm. Note the echo again of the Exodus plagues in the falling of the giant hailstones, for which men continue to curse God.

Rev.17.1-6 In the vision John is now conducted by one of the seven angels of the plagues to see what is happening to the city of Babylon. There is something about this image which is more than applicable just to Rome. The prostitute sits on 'many waters', which fits a description of the city of Babylon more than Rome. But also, this is the city which whored with the non-gods, which seems more to fit with Jerusalem.

Perhaps the symbolism applies to the great power-centres across time, the city-centres of Empire where the Good News of Jesus has been opposed and where syncretism and idolatry have been rife. The woman shown to John is sitting on a creature with seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads seem to tie in with the famed seven hills of Rome, the ten horns may be connected to the number of Caesars, yet there is something more generic about this scene as well.

The woman is arrayed splendidly, like a well-designed city, with a cup full of adulterous idolatry. Just as in great cities, inscriptions are carved everywhere, this woman has an inscription carved into her forehead, denoting her as 'mystery' (Greek μυστήριον *mystéerion*, that which is shut up, or hidden,) a possible link to the Gnostic heresy which had originated in the east, She is Babylon the Great, the filthy sink of idolatry, sexual excess and godlessness, who is also drunk on Christian blood. The degradation of the sight takes John's breath away.

Rev.17.7-8 The angel notices John's awe, and gives the interpretation of the vision. The woman, who is the city, rides the beast of the Roman Empire, centred in Rome of the seven hills and ten Caesars. The Empire has a reputation for surviving trouble, hence it was, and is not, and will be. It may also be that the beast is identified with a reincarnation of Nero, who continues to oppress the believers coming out of the abyss.

Rev.17.9-11 The seven heads of the beast are explicitly linked to hills, which are in Rome. However, in a double symbolism, they also refer to seven kings, and here the identification becomes very difficult. Suggestions have been made linking them with the succession of Roman emperors, or with subsequent Empires, but we must leave their exact interpretation to others.

Rev.17.12-14 The ten horns of the beast represent ten kings to come who will ally with Rome and will war against the saints of God – perhaps the Parthians are meant by this, who actually Nero brought to peace with Rome earlier. Whatever the outcome, the Lamb will overcome them, for He is the overlord, the King over all Kings.

Rev.17.15-18 The many waters on which the harlot sits represent an international number of peoples. This can be tied well into the idea of Rome's wide sweep of power. Just a few years before, in 60 to 61AD, Rome succeeded in putting down a fierce revolt in far-off Britain, spearheaded by Queen Boudicca. However, there may be a suggestion here that the seeds of the city's destruction are within her, and internal conflict will

arise between the whore and the beast. The woman is once again identified with the ruling city, the centre of power which is at the heart of every Empire.

Rev.18.1-8 An angel lights up the earth as he comes, speaking with enormous confidence, proclaiming the destruction of the nexus of evil which is Babylon. The people of God are urged to quit her gates, for God's judgement is about to be revealed against her.

Rev.18.9-10 The client powers who have drawn their legitimacy from the Babylonian set-up will be terrified as she falls, for their authority will be in the balances with hers.

Rev.18.11-17 The commerce which has depended on her enabling and wealth will be useless, in spite of their variety and luxury, coming from all parts of the known world. Shipping will come to a halt with no trade going on.

Rev.18.18-20 The seamen who look on at her will mourn the loss, but the people of God, the people who have been yielded and uniquely God's own throughout, along with His emissaries, will rejoice at this *right-wising* in their favour.

Rev.18.21-24 As a demonstration of the extent of the city's fall, an angel hurls a rock into the sea, and likens it to the violence which will accompany Babylon's collapse. All trade and arts, society and production will cease, because of the blood of the faithful witnesses of God staining her streets.

Rev.19.1-5 Now, with the fall of the power-base of evil, heaven breaks out in praise to God, who has expunged the sins of the whore. The elders and living creatures join with them, in a great Amen, and from the throne itself comes a call to exalt the Lord. With man's control broken, the scene is now set for the transformation of all things and for heaven to come back together with earth in consummation.

Day 365

The Consummation of All Things; the Story Ends and Begins

Revelation 19.6 – 22.21

As John's Revelation on Patmos comes to a close, and with it the witness of the Scriptures, there is the entrance of a new age, the restoration of all things, heaven and earth uniting and the unseen becoming seen. The resurrection of the universe has come, and its crowning glory is the Lamb and His bride, the church triumphant through His rescuing power.

Rev. 19 6-8 John hears a vast shout going up which is like the thunder of waterfalls, in acclamation and announcement of the arrival of the wedding of the Lamb to His bride, the church, which has been preparing herself for this day.

It is notable that the word ‘Hallelujah’ – praise the Lord in Hebrew – is found only in the New Testament in Revelation as an expression of Christian praise, despite its appearing in so many Christian hymns and songs subsequently.

The bride wears fine linen (Greek βύσσινον λαμπρόν *bhýssinon lamprón*, shining linen,) which is a sign of the righteous deeds of the people of God. Linen is worn by the priests of the Old Covenant, next to their skin, so that they do not sweat in the service of God. It is also woven into the tabernacle of God in Exodus. Here the new priesthood is also arrayed in shining linen.

Rev.19.9-10 John is told to write down a note of the joy of expectation of being called to the Lamb’s wedding supper, at which he falls to worship the angel speaking to him. However, the angel refuses his homage, denoting himself as a fellow-slave (Greek σύνδουλος *sýndhoulos*) with the people of God who witness to Jesus. Worship is only to be directed to God. He says also that the essence of all prophecy, including his own, is the pointing to Jesus as the One fulfilment of all things.

Rev.19.11-16 As the angel speaks, the unseen realm unfolds to reveal the Bridegroom, a horseman named Faithful and True (Greek πιστός και ἀληθινός *pistós kai aleethinós*) who is coming to *right-wise* in the earth. This is Jesus Christ, for His robes are dipped in blood and He is called the Word of God, the title John gives Him at the beginning of his gospel. He has also His name written on His side, King of Kings and Lords and Lords. This is the final judgement, the day of the Lord appearing, promised so long.

Rev.19.17-18 There is a call to the carrion birds to come and consume what will be left of the world system and its potentates and pawns after the final battle.

Rev.19.19-21 Battle now ensues, as the collected armies of earth turn on the White Rider and His heavenly forces, but the beast and his prophet who has been the spiritual mover of the beast’s rule are taken prisoner and are destroyed in a lake of sulphur. The rest of the forces are wiped out by the mouth-sword of the Word of God, and the carrion birds feed on them. It is a powerful and shocking image John describes here.

Rev.20.1-3 Although John describes the beast and the prophet as finished, the dragon, who is satan, is still at large. An angel comes with the key to the abyss, and a chain, and binds the devil with it and locks him in the great pit for a millennium, so that his deception of the world is not possible, although John writes that he must be released yet for a while after the thousand years.

Rev.20.4-6 The Thrones of judgement are designated, John says, to those who are given authority, although he does not name them. Those beheaded for Christ in life, who have not taken the mark of the beast are resurrected in a first resurrection, which sets them apart as priests of Christ, reigning with Him for the millennium.

Rev.20.7-10 At the end of the thousand years, satan is finally released to go out again and to lead the nations into deception once again – a sign that the people of God are to be constantly alert to his wiles, for even when he seems bound he may spring back. He

assembles again the armies of the earth, symbolised by the ancient names of Gog and Magog, mentioned first in Ezekiel 38.2, of uncertain derivation, but peoples of the north. They ready themselves for war, but both they and the devil are consumed by fire, like ancient Nadab and Abihu. The devil is finally destroyed in the lake of sulphurous fire, where torture forever awaits him and his accomplices.

Rev.20.11-15 Finally a great shining throne is revealed to John, terrible in its presence, so that earth and sky pale into nothing before it. The dead are raised, and the final analysis is begun, with reference to the books of record of lives lived, and the Book of Life, later called, 'the Lamb's book of life' in 21.27. On the basis of the records, the dead are evaluated. Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire – which indicates that Hades is the holding place for the dead, not the hell some would assert. What is terrible is that any who have refused God's offer of life are given over to the lake of fire, the final destruction, the second death.

Rev.21.1-5 From this horrific scene, John's sight is now captured by the resurrection of all things – there is a new heaven and earth, together not apart. The original creation has been superseded by the new, and the sea is removed, the ancient barrier and symbol of chaos. And in place of the harlot of Babylon, the city of man, now appears the city of God, new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, and finally, God and man are re-united to live together in close proximity, as it was in Eden. Edenic order is restored, pain is dismissed, with death and mourning. The old age has gone, this is the age of renewal.

Rev.21.6-8 The enthroned One speaks to John as the A to Z, the beginning and end, the summation of everything. The promise is made again of the water of life to those who thirst, the renewal of Christ's promise of John 7.37 to drink of the Spirit of God, while those who refuse this life will perish in fire.

Rev.21.9-14 One of the seven bowl-carrying angels takes John to see closer the arrival of the bride, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, from the vantage point of a high mountain. John's words are stretched to the limits to describe the majesty of this sight, with the city's twelve gates, one named for each of Israel's twelve sons, while the city has twelve foundation stones inscribed with the names of the twelve emissaries of Jesus, the apostles of the Lamb.

Rev.21.15-21 In a scene very reminiscent of the revelation to Ezekiel in Ez.40, John is shown the measurements of the city, each of whose foundation stones are made of a different precious material, and the main street which is gold.

Rev.21.22-27 The Temple, however, has disappeared, because God and the Lamb take its place. This emphasises the ephemeral nature of any human construction, and reminds the reader that God cannot be contained in a structure. God's glory is its light, and the Lamb Himself is the beacon through which the light shines. There is a very deliberate conjoining here of Jesus in His heavenly nature with the person of God Himself. The city is full of that which is uniquely God's, full of holiness and nothing impure can exist in its light. Those living here are those written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Rev.22.1-5 Again, in a vision aligned with Ezekiel 47, John sees the river of the Spirit, the water of life, flowing from God's throne into the new earth, down the middle of the

street of New Jerusalem. The trees, as in Ezekiel 47.12ff are fruit-bearing and bring healing. As the vision pans out to take all this in, the throne of God is seen at the centre of the city, which is full of inhabitants marked with His mark. There is no more night, no more sun or moon, for there is no darkness. And together they rule in life.

Rev.22.6-7 The angel speaking to John now confirms the reliability of all John has seen, and imparts the words of promise that Christ will soon return, blessing the prophetic words John has recorded.

Rev.22.8-11 John now adds his own confirmation of what took place. He is so overwhelmed, that he prostrates himself and tries to worship the angel. But, as before the angel forbids him, and reminds him that the angel is a co-slave with the people of God. John is encouraged not to make the book inaccessible by sealing it up, but to leave it open, as it were, as a statement to all, even to those who continue in their sin.

Rev.22.12-16 In the closing passage, John records the words he hears from Jesus Himself, promising His return as the A to Z, first and last, source of all and completion of all (Greek ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος *archée kai télos* – *télos* meaning the summing up, the purpose.) He blesses those who keep their robes clean with the city in view, but emphasises the separation that will come before the end from the practitioners of evil.

Jesus describes Himself in a last ‘I am’ of Scripture as the Root and Seed of David, the bright morning star, that is, Venus, the last star in the sky, announcing the dawn at the end of night.

Rev.22.17 As at the beginning, the Spirit is hovering over the bride, inspiring her to call Jesus back, to yearn for her bridegroom. And in the meanwhile, He is freely given to all who come as the water of life, As Jesus promised, freely.

Rev.22.18-19 John warns against the tampering with the contents of the revelation of Jesus Christ which has been recorded, at the perpetrator’s peril. Nothing is to be added or removed.

Rev.22.20 A last promise of Jesus is heard, that He is coming, to which the reply goes back ‘Yes, come Lord Jesus.’

Rev. 22.21 The closing words of the Scriptures as we have them is an invocation of the *chesed*-grace of the Lord Jesus to be with God’s people, a call for His self-sacrificial obligation sealed with the wounds of Christ to be our constant accompaniment.