

Fallen: The Fate of the Mega-Whore

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Introduction

The fall of Babylon is located in the section depicting the pouring of the seventh bowl in the second vision of John. From a literary angle, the first vision includes Christ and the seven churches (1:9-3:22);¹ and the second, the heavenly throne, scroll, trumpets, and bowls, and the temple, dragon, woman, and two beasts (4:1-16:21). The third vision contains details of Babylon, the beast, ten kings, and the final messianic victory and consummation (17:1-21:8). The fourth includes the new Jerusalem (21:8-22:5). The seventh bowl includes a proclamation of the fall of Babylon with a great earthquake and a plague of hailstones (16:19). John introduced Babylon in 14:8 and 16:19, and now singles out this image in chapters 17-18, describing it in detail as an important aspect of the coming of the end.

This essay shall identify the distinctive characteristics of Babylon, examine the basis for her condemnation, and probe prophetic statements of her destruction, by analyzing apocalyptic imagery, OT motifs, and descriptive clues in chapters 17-18. I will then draw theological implications based on exegesis of the relevant texts, within a qualified present/future interpretive framework. The present/future approach takes present descriptions not as simple allegories, but as defining present apocalyptic metaphors in eschatological outlook.² It maintains that the symbols are meant to enable the churches to understand their present situations in view of an essential eschatological reality (cf. 21:9-10; 2 Ezra 9:38-10:54). Taking the claim of Revelation to be a prophecy, this approach casts the present in light of the future (cf. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19). Hence, the symbol of the woman as the great city envisages an eschatological Babylon in history.³ In what follows, I will present how John's imagery of Babylon functions as a medium of eschatological insight. Beyond the purview of the study is an analysis of the identity of the beast and the ten kings and the question of the time sequence of the prophetic events.

The Identity of Babylon

Revelation 17 can be divided into three sections—the introduction (17:1-2), the vision of the great whore (17:3-6), and the interpretation of that vision (17:7-18). In the introduction, John describes the woman as, καθήμενης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν, “sitting on many waters” (17:1).⁴ It alludes to Jer. 15:13, which refers to the many waterways of the Euphrates winding their way through Babylon. Yet historic Babylon is applied to Rome, identifying it symbolically, not by the analogy of many waters in Rome, but by the peoples and nations representing the figure of many waters (17:15; cf. Isa. 8:7; 17:12-14;

¹ Where there are no Scripture abbreviations, the verse numbers refer to Revelation.

² Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 172-173. Similarly, George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 12-14.

³ G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1966), 226.

⁴ All literal translations are mine, using the lexicon of F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983).

Jer. 47:2). Like Babylon, Rome is the queen city of the nations.⁵ In this light, the Rome that sits on many peoples and nations prefigures an eschatological Babylon that sits on the nations of the earth.

That the angel identifies the woman with “the great city” is indicated in 17:18;⁶ but whether she is the imperial city of Rome is subject to debate. Like ancient Babylon, Rome also sits on seven mountains (17:9). However, unlike Babylon, Rome was not constructed on many waters.⁷ In the first century, Rome is the only great world city that would match the descriptions of Babylon in 18:1-18. Only Rome matches the marks of absolute power, alluring luxury, and unbound immorality (17:1-2, 19). Nevertheless, if Rome is Babylon, her destruction ushers in the coming of the end, with the coming of Christ in battle against the forces of Satan. Of course, Christ has not yet come. Satan is still active in this world. This means that Rome has not yet been destroyed. For those who maintain John’s claim of prophecy, this view remains insufficient. Thus, we must look further into the distinctive descriptions of the woman.

John further depicts the woman as, καθήμενην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον, “sitting on a scarlet wild beast” (17:1, 3). There is no seeming contradiction between the report of the woman sitting on many waters and the same woman sitting on a scarlet beast. John typically juxtaposes one image over another, but with a specific referent (cf. 5:5-6; 7:4-9; 21:9-10).⁸ The former reflects her link with the nations; the latter, her link with the beast and the ten kings. The verb, καθῆσθαι, “to sit,” used emphatically to describe the posture of the woman in four places (17:1, 3, 9, 15), signifies a symbolic relationship with the beast. It may indicate enthronement, as D. E. Aune suggests, recalling the minted coins in Nero’s time, depicting the goddess Roma dressed in military clothes and seated on Rome’s seven hills, holding a small Roman sword on her left knee.⁹ G. K. Beale however sees Roma as only one among many backgrounds for the woman. That the woman exercises a controlling influence over the nations is clear in 18:7, where Babylon declares, κάθῃμαι βασίλισσα, “I sit [as] queen.”¹⁰ There are political, economic, religious, and military overtones. If Babylon is the woman sitting on the beast and if the woman is the city of Rome, the beast must be the power of imperial Rome,¹¹ and in particular, its military might.¹² The city of Rome, as the ruling power, rides on the back of Rome’s military power. The power of historic Babylon may compare with the political, economic, religious, and military influence of Rome over the nations, making it the symbolic referent of an eschatological Babylon as the revived eschatological Rome exercising a powerful worldwide influence. Eschatological Babylon then must be the

⁵ I. T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 691-692.

⁶ All Scripture is taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

⁷ Ladd, *A Commentary*, 222.

⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax*, 179-185.

⁹ David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (WBC 52C; ed. Ralph P. Martin; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 920, 929.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 848. See also Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation* (EBC 12; ed. Frank E. Gaebelain; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 555.

¹¹ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 691.

¹² Bauckham, *The Climax*, 343.

corrupting worldwide political, economic, and religious system that rides on the military power of the beast and the ten kings.

Yet A. F. Johnson convincingly makes the case that the descriptions of the great whore, Babylon, may not refer to any particular city past, present, or future, but epitomize every idolatrous and immoral manifestation of spiritual whoredom in time and space. The whore cities in the OT all reflect the characteristics of Babylon in Revelation. They are marked by luxury and overabundance (Jer. 51:13; Ezek. 16:13; Nah. 2:9; cf. 18:3, 7), self-confident boasting (Isa. 14:12-14; Jer. 50:31; cf. 18:7), power and persecution of God's people (Jer. 51:35; Ezek. 23:37; cf. 18:10, 24), repression and injustice (Isa. 14:4; Ezek. 16:49; cf. 18:5, 20), and idolatry (Jer. 51:47; Ezek. 16:17; Nah. 1:14; cf. 17:4-5; 18:3). In that, John joins all these characteristics of ancient Babylon and apostate Jerusalem in one composite of the mega-whore, wherever these traits are manifested in history therefore, there is Babylon.¹³ As the many waters symbolize the extent of the political, economic, and religious influence of Babylon, it can be argued then that such powerful corrupting influence in all nations is total and universal,¹⁴ covering all eras of history.

In the vision, the woman's sitting position connotes her anti-Christ and anti-saint alliance with the beast (17:6). The scarlet wild beast is described as full of ὀνόματα βλασφημίας ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα, "names of slander having seven heads and ten horns" (17:3; cf. 13:1). The genitive, "names of slander," may be a descriptive genitive—"names characterized by slander," an exegetical genitive or genitive of definition¹⁵—"names which are slanderous," or most likely, an attributive genitive—"slanderous names." That Rome is many-headed is attested (Sib. Or. 3:175-176). Identifying Babylon with Rome, R. H. Mounce, with Aune, logically supposes that "blasphemous names" could refer to the titles of Roman emperors, such as "lord," "savior," "son of god," or "divine,"¹⁶ or the countless gods of Rome and the nations under her, as R. H. Charles suggest.¹⁷ The slanderous names of the beast may refer to the beast itself that usurps the glory and honor that is due to the only true God alone. In this case, it is not so much the blasphemies spoken by the beast as in his "self-deification,"¹⁸ which demands the worship of all peoples (cf. 13:4-8; 14:6-11), and his claim to earthly rule reserved only to the messiah,¹⁹ that are blasphemous. As the beast is full of blasphemous names, so the woman consents to it in their unholy union. In that the whore is enthroned on the beast, Babylon then is marked by a full measure of both slanderous self-glory and self-sufficiency.

¹³ Johnson, *Revelation*, 555.

¹⁴ Bauckham, *The Climax*, 326.

¹⁵ Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation of John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 429.

¹⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 310; also, David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC 52B; ed. Ralph P. Martin; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 734.

¹⁷ R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of John* (vol. 2; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), 64.

¹⁸ Mounce, *Revelation*, 310; Ladd, *A Commentary*, 223.

¹⁹ Beale, *The Book*, 684; Smalley, *The Revelation*, 429; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 611.

John's focus on the woman's dress—"in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls" (17:4), may yet expose her identity. What is striking is the close correspondence between 17:4 and 18:16, which describes the apparel of the city. In 17:18, the woman is identified as the mega-city that rules over the kings of the earth. In 18:16, the city symbolizes the woman. To identify the city is to identify the woman. Both are symbols of a single referent—Babylon, which is the embodiment of all idolatrous immorality, exploitative economic wealth, and oppressive political power. G. R. Osborne, with Aune, supposes that the color purple symbolizes royalty (Jud. 8:26; Esth. 8:15). Scarlet typifies wealth (2 Sam. 1:24; Prov. 31:21).²⁰ Yet I. T. Beckwith is probably correct in seeing a connection of the colors with "gold and jewels and pearls" immediately following (17:4), signifying the depraved luxury of Babylon.²¹ As is true for most whores today, the prostitutes of the past were recognized for their ostentatious way of dressing, with their wealth coming from their lovers.²² The woman's dress and ornaments may thus signify the extent of her seductive power over the kings and inhabitants of the earth.

If the woman is recognized by her actions in 17:4, she is now identified by her name and title in 17:5. Written on her forehead are the words—Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς, "Babylon the great, the mother of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth" (17:5). Rev. 17:5 and 17:4 are linked by two key words—βδελυγμάτων, "abominations" (βδελυγμάτων, "detestable," 17:4) and πορνῶν, "prostitutes" (πορνείας, "prostitution," 17:4). In 17:4, John saw the woman "holding in her hand a golden cup" (17:4), which alludes to Jer. 51:7 (28:7, LXX). In Jer. 51:7, Babylon herself is the golden cup used by the Lord. But in 17:4, Babylon herself drinks from a golden cup, which is filled with βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, "detestable things and the uncleanness of her prostitution." βδελυγμά may refer to moral and ceremonial uncleanness linked with idolatry.²³ ἀκάθαρτα is a word often linked with unclean spirits (Matt. 10:1) and idolatry (2 Cor. 6:17).²⁴ G. B. Caird connects uncleanness with the world of the demonic, and by extension, to the realm of "false gods."²⁵ Beale adds that it is the deceiving, unclean spirits that work behind the idolatry of Babylon.²⁶ As there is a link between false doctrines, idolatry, and immorality, the prostituting uncleanness of Babylon is thus signified by doctrinal apostasy and idolatry (cf. 2:14-15; 13:5-8). Babylon and her economic, political, and religious alliances with the kings of the earth are thus described as morally corrupt, idolatrous, and demonic. By her idolatry, she draws away people from serving the true God, but seduces them to serve her own system of corrupted affluence powered by demonic sorcery (cf. 18:23).

The title, Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, "Babylon the great," alludes to Dan. 4:30, where Nebuchadnezzar praises himself for his power and majesty. The allusion to historical

²⁰ Osborne, *Revelation*, 611; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 935; Charles, *A Critical*, 64. Unconvincing is Beale's suggestion (followed by Smalley, *The Revelation*, 429), that scarlet typifies Babylon's "persecuting manner," citing 17:6, which may be unrelated and puts too much weight on just a single word. Beale, *The Book*, 855. See Osborne, *Revelation*, 610n 7.

²¹ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 691.

²² Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 935.

²³ Mounce, *Revelation*, 311.

²⁴ Johnson, *Revelation*, 556.

²⁵ Caird, *The Revelation*, 214.

²⁶ Beale, *The Book*, 855-856.

Babylon hence points to eschatological Babylon, which is identified by her pride of great glory and power over the peoples. The noun, μήτηρ, “mother,” is “an archetype anticipating a later reality and suggesting a derivative relationship,”²⁷ denoting origin or source. The genitive chain, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς, “the mother of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth” (17:5) is instructive. The first and second genitives may be classified as an attributive genitive—“prostituting mother” and “earthly abominations,” which seem to fit the context. But the second genitive may describe the head substantive as a descriptive genitive—“mother characterized by earthly abominations.” Babylon not merely causes all systemic evil, but also embodies it. Unsatisfying then is R. Bauckham’s notion that “mother” refers to “the mother-city, the metropolis,” which retains the literal reference to Rome, but misses its symbolism.²⁸ In either case, prostitution and abomination are the innate and distinct qualities of Babylon. As the mother of prostitutes and abominations, it is her nature to produce idolatrous immorality, blasphemous self-glory, and detestable lifestyles. As the historical source of all ungodliness, moral filth, and depravity, eschatological Babylon shall continue to allure the earth.

The Indictment of Babylon

In the introduction, the bowl angel invites John to see the judgment of the mega-whore. The invitation already carries a double condemnation—that, ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, “the kings of the earth have committed illicit sex” with the mega-whore and that, ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, “[those] inhabiting the earth were made drunk out of the wine of her immorality” (17:2; cf. Nah. 3:1-4; Sib. Or. 5.160-171). The first condemnation parallels with 18:3, 18:9, and 19:2. It alludes to Isa. 23:17, which speaks of Tyre, which “will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.” The verb, ἐπόρνευσαν, “have committed illicit sex,” is usually linked with prostitution.²⁹ The metaphor of prostitution carries with it connotations of religious apostasy marked by idolatry in the OT (Jer. 2:24; 3:6-9; 13:27; Ezek. 16:15; 20:30; Hos. 2:5; 4:11-15). It symbolizes Israel’s faithlessness to Yahweh, her covenant husband (Lev. 17:7; 20:5-6; Num. 14:33; Hos. 1:2; Jer. 2:20; 13:27; Ezek. 6:8; 43:7, 9). Although adultery is a metaphor that nowhere fits the relationship of Babylon with Yahweh, John uses it to refer to religious disloyalty marked by false doctrines and idolatry (cf. 2:14-15, 20-21; 9:20-21). Just like the unholy compromise of clergy with the god of mammon today, the religious leaders of Jerusalem already showed signs of compromise with Rome. They enriched themselves out of a lust for money and engaged in sinful living (CD 8.14-15). The metaphor of prostitution may serve as a warning then for believers to resist the idolatrous political, economic, and religious allurements of Babylon (cf. 18:4).

Aune posits the political alliances between Babylon and her consort kings. The singling out of Babylon parallels “the ancient and modern double standard” of blaming the other woman for the illicit sexual relationship more than the man. Such political alliances bring economic, religious, and social consequences.³⁰ Yet as in modern times,

²⁷ L&N, s. v. πατήρ, πατρός, 58.64.

²⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax*, 348.

²⁹ L&N, s. v. πορνέω; ἐκπορνέω, 88.271.

³⁰ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 931.

the reverse is more likely. Rome used her wealth to control her subjects.³¹ Ancient near eastern economics determined geo-politics. In the allusion to Tyre, the economic trade is called prostitution. That Babylon is marked by the motif of wealth and luxury indicates a strong economic element (cf. 18:3, 15). In that the symbol of prostitution connotes political influence, economic prosperity, and religious apostasy, the sexual immorality of Babylon may well involve consorting with the anti-God values and demands of an idolatrous political, social, economic, and religious system.³² The kings of the earth are indicted then, for they exert their power to lead the nations into pursuing the political, economic, social, and religious goals of the beast. In enforcing the worship of idols, including the idol of money and prosperity,³³ they enforce in effect the worship of the beast (cf. 13:4-8; 14:6-11).

The second denunciation pictures the people of the earth made drunk by the wine of sexual immorality with Babylon. The genitive, τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, “the wine of her illicit sex,” is most likely—expegetical or a genitive of definition—“the wine, namely, her illicit sex.” The metaphor shifts from that of the kings to the peoples of their kingdoms, but the motif of sexual prostitution is repeated. Parallels are found in 14:8, 18:3, and 19:2. It alludes to Jer. 51:7 (28:7, LXX), “Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD’s hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine.” Wine, illicit sex, and idolatry are usually linked (Hos. 4:11-12). That immorality is idolatry is clear and clearly condemned in Revelation (cf. 2:14, 20-21; 9:21). The woman’s wine of illicit sex refers to the wine of the idolatrous economic prosperity of Babylon, as indicated in 18:3, 9-19, where immorality and idolatry are described in terms of economic trade. If economic trade is construed as prostitution by Tyre, the wine of economic intercourse with Babylon has intoxicated the peoples of the earth. Such inebriation ensures their economic security, but lowers any resistance to Babylon’s destructive sway, and desensitizes against any dread of divine judgment (Isa. 29:9).³⁴

The third condemnation is directed against the merchants of the earth, who, ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν, “out of the power of her sensuality have become rich” (18:3). The noun, στρήνου, “sensuality,” denotes sensual living “by gratifying the senses with sexual immorality.”³⁵ The thread that ties the condemnation of the three groups is the sin of idolatrous intercourse with Babylon. Big business has become filthy rich by consorting with Babylon. It is not the exploitation of the poor at all that is in view in Rev. 18, as in the use of the power of wealth to stimulate sin and corrupt the world, to cause the death of the saints, and to fuel idolatrous self-glory that usurps the glory of God (cf. 18:3, 20, 24). Babylon has exerted her sensual economic influence not just through the political kings, but also through the business kings, destroying godly values, leading many into idolatrous living, and oppressing those who resist her. The churches in Asia Minor knew it as a present reality, with the powerful trade guilds and their patron gods pressuring them. The refusal to bow to the dictates of the guilds caused the loss of jobs and business caused economic hardship and poverty among the churches

³¹ Osborne, *Revelation*, 637.

³² Beale, *The Book*, 848-850. See also Smalley, *The Revelation*, 427.

³³ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 487.

³⁴ Beale, *The Book*, 849.

³⁵ L&N, s. v. στρηνιάω ; στρήνος, ους, 88.254.

then.³⁶ Yet John projects an eschatological Babylon of world proportions, but whose unavoidable end they can now anticipate.

From the gold cup filled with abhorrent things and the toxic waste of her sexual immorality (17:4), the woman is seen as, μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ, “drunken from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (17:6). The ESV—“with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”—may mislead some to think that the saints are the martyrs. But the parallel in 16:6 distinguishes the saints from the prophets—αἷμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν, “the blood of saints and prophets.”³⁷ Hence, we have two groups of victims of Babylon here—the saints and the speakers of Jesus.

Two things are apparent. Blood and wine is associated in the OT (Gen. 49:11; Deut. 32:14; Isa. 49:26). But the wine of blood in the gold cup belongs to the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus. The plural noun, μαρτύρων, “witnesses,” is derived from μαρτύς, which refers to, “a person who has been deprived of life as the result of bearing witness to his beliefs—‘martyr.’”³⁸ The wine of blood thus symbolizes the killing of God’s people—those who proclaim Jesus’ testimony. Such testimony stands in opposition to the mega-whore. Being drunk with blood is a figure for being desirous of violence in ancient times.³⁹ That she is μεθύουσαν, “drunken,” with the saints’ blood indicates her lust for continuing murderous opposition to their testimony. Her drunkenness also shows her apparent delight in the persecution and death of the saints.⁴⁰ In that the extent of Rome’s persecution of the saints seems sporadic⁴¹ and limited to its own time, Rome alone cannot sufficiently account for the spilling of martyrs’ blood in all history, esp. the time leading up to the coming of the end. As historic Babylon persecuted God’s people, and as mysterious Babylon is drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs, so shall an eschatological Babylon be marked with a lust for violence against those who shall bear the testimony of the Lamb. In light of the woman’s seductive influence of the world and her persecution of the saints, her crime is thus on the same level with that of the dragon and the beast (12:9, 17; 13:7-9).⁴²

The Impending Doom of Babylon

In this section, we will focus on texts that describe or echo the destruction of Babylon. In the interpretation of the vision by the bowl angel, the time will come when the ten horns and the beast will hate the prostitute. “They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire” (17:16). This alludes to Ezek. 23:25-29 which refers to Jerusalem. The stripping naked of a prostitute is an OT motif (cf. Jer. 13:26-27; Ezek. 16:37-38; Hos. 2:5, 12; Nah. 3:5). The allies of Babylon shall turn against her, destroying her. They shall make her, ἠρημωμένην, “desolate; lay

³⁶ Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 487; Beale, *The Book*, 919.

³⁷ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 935; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (INTCS; ed. Grant R. Osborne; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 193n 17:6. Contra—Mounce, Beale, Osborne, and Smalley, who see only one group, taking *kai* as exegetical (“that is”)—the martyred saints. Mounce, *The Book*, 312; Beale, *The Book*, 860; Osborne, *Revelation*, 613; Smalley, *The Revelation*, 432.

³⁸ L&N, s. v. μάρτυς, μάρτυρο, 20.67.

³⁹ Charles, *A Critical*, 66.

⁴⁰ Smalley, *The Revelation*, 432.

⁴¹ Ladd, *A Commentary*, 8-9; Beale, *The Book*, 28.

⁴² Michaels, *Revelation*, 193.

wasted.” It means, “to suffer destruction, with the implication of being deserted and abandoned.”⁴³ To make the city look destroyed and deserted is to devastate the place and strip it of people and resources. In this sense, Babylon shall be stripped “naked.” The metaphor of devouring the flesh recalls the eating of Jezebel’s flesh by the dogs (1 Ki. 21:23-24; cf. 2:19-29). The burning up with fire evokes the OT law of burning of a priest’s daughter as punishment for prostitution (Lev. 21:9).⁴⁴

Viewed historically, if Babylon is Rome, then her destruction was caused by an invasion of an allied army led by a returning beast (the myth of a revived Nero or scheming generals?) that brought about her downfall in history. Viewed in futurist anticipation, a political and economic confederation of nations in a revived Roman empire shall rise up against the united apostate, religious church (Babylon) and destroy it in an eschatological civil war.⁴⁵ Then they shall hand over power to the beast, identified as the Antichrist. Viewed spiritually, the ten kings are all the anti-Christian forces of the earth in every sector: political, economic, religious, military, and cultural, which will destroy each other in the process. A variant symbolical view is that the political side of the anti-Christ system shall turn against the religious, social, and economic side.⁴⁶ What is clear is that the beast shall demand the worship of his subjects (cf. 13:4-8; 14:6-11). His action against Babylon appears to be an act of eliminating any rival to his deified posture. Either way, the net result is the internal implosion of the whole system. The satanic system shall self-destruct. Out of it shall rise a new world order that shall worship the beast alone.

The ultimate cause of Babylon’s destruction is the sovereign purpose of God. The Greek in 17:17, ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν, “for God has given into their hearts,” parallels Neh. 7:5 (LXX), ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὴν καρδίαν, “God has given into my heart.” In Neh. 7:5, God guides Nehemiah in managing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In 17:17, God directs the hearts of the kings. The active voice is revealing. It is God who directs them to carry out his purpose. The tense is conspicuous. After four successive future indicatives in 17:16—μισήσουσιν, “will hate,” ἠρημωμένην ποιήσουσιν, “will make desolate,” φάγονται, “will devour,” and κατακαύσουσιν, “will burn up”—there is the aorist indicative, θεὸς ἔδωκεν, “God has given,” in 17:17.

Two aorist infinitives that follow the aorist indicative signify the purpose of divine guidance in the hearts of the rebellious kings. They are ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην καὶ δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ, “to do one intention and to give the kingdom to the wild beast.” The use of two infinitives should make the *kai* function, not epexegetically (“to do one intention, which is, to give the kingdom”), for the giving of the kingdom is not its sole purpose, but an additional purpose to the first purpose of agreeing on a single intention. That the giving of the kingdom defines rather than describes the first purpose makes it more an appositional, than an epexegetical infinitive—“to do one intention and

⁴³ L&N, s. v. ἐρημόμοι ; ἐρήμωσις, εως, 20.41.

⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 957.

⁴⁵ Osborne, *Revelation*, 625; Beale, *The Book*, 883.

⁴⁶ Beale, *The Book*, 883, 885. However, the political side relies on the economic, social, and religious side as a power base. If the net result is the destruction of the socio-economic and religious side, how will the beast rule the earth, with worldwide economies crashing? In any case, the satanic system shall be “divided against itself.” Johnson, *Revelation*, 562. See also Caird, *The Revelation*, 221.

to give the kingdom.”⁴⁷ This is what God put in their hearts to do—to unite and agree on one purpose and that is to destroy Babylon; and then to hand over power and authority to the beast (cf. 17:13). This purpose shall be, ἄχρι τελεσθήσονται οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ, “until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (17:17). The nations shall be under the rule of the beast, until the final battle in 19:19. The “words of God” here may refer to the prophecies until the destruction of the beast.⁴⁸ Like most myths, there is indeed a struggle between the forces of good and evil. Unlike myths however, there is only one controlling purpose behind history—God’s design. Evil forces serve the divine purpose. The closing phrase in 17:17 underscores two unchanging truths. God controls history and God fulfills his prophetic word in due time.

The foregone conclusion of the judgment of Babylon is shown in the aorist indicatives in, ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, “fallen, fallen Babylon the great” (18:2; cf. 14:8). The double repetition of ἔπεσεν, “fallen,” is a Hebraic emphasis. In what is called a prophetic perfect, the fall of Babylon is a done deal, even though the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled in the future. It has not yet occurred, but it is expressed as if it already has happened. With the certainty of the event is the assurance of accomplishment of the divine will. For our purposes, we focus on 18:3, which gives three reasons for the Babylon’s downfall. The first two are already mentioned in 14:2, 8. The third reason is stated—“the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living” (cf. 18:15). It recalls the wealth of Babylon enjoyed by big business interests (17:3-4, 9, 16-17, 19). Somebody once said that there are two sure things in this world—death and taxes. The wealth of Rome, as with Babylon, was borne by taxes, but trade profits also.⁴⁹ When there is great wealth, there is great power. Babylon the great symbolizes a dominant world system full of pride in wealth and power (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).⁵⁰

A relevant text is 18:6, “Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.” The double payment as punishment for Babylon alludes to Jer. 16:18, “I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin” (cf. Ex. 22; Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18; 17:18). The first clause corresponds with the second clause in 18:6, which speaks of equal payment. The third and fifth clauses also parallel the fourth and sixth clauses, all of which speak of double payment. The parallelism is striking in the following chiasmic parallels.

A Pay her back
 B as she herself has paid back others,
 A1 repay her double
 B1 for her deeds;
 A2 mix a double portion for her
 B2 in the cup she mixed

Equal payment is also demanded in the next verse (18:7). Beckwith has compellingly argued that the phrase, “double . . . the double” is a “conventional

⁴⁷ See also Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 478. Contra—Beckwith, who thinks that the one purpose is to give power to the beast. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 703.

⁴⁸ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 703.

⁴⁹ Caird, *The Revelation*, 223; Smalley, *The Revelation*, 430; Beale, *The Book*, 854.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Revelation*, 566.

expression for ‘full requital’” in the LXX.⁵¹ Given this sense, and with 18:7 corresponding to 18:6, the voice must be asking equal payment in its full measure.⁵² Yet the severity of her sins and eschatological wrath form the framework for this statement. Thus, with L. Morris and Osborne,⁵³ it would be cogent to see both emphases in 18:6-7, given the exceptional emotive enmity against the guilty whore, in which an eye for an eye may be insufficient. In view of her abominable sins, a more severe penalty is demanded.⁵⁴

As the whore drank from the cup of the saints’ blood, so she will drink from the cup of God’s wrath. As to who will pay back to Babylon, Aune suggests the possibility of believers taking vengeance on Babylon, citing the righteous as “agents of divine retribution” in Jewish apocalyptic (cf. 17:4).⁵⁵ Yet the whole tenor of Revelation points to Christ who rides on a white horse, defeating all the evil forces of the beast and Satan, and casting them into the lake of fire. Ultimately then, Christ is the ultimate vindicator.

Another germane text for the judgment of Babylon is 18:8, “For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire.” The reason is cited in 18:7, “since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’” In this soliloquy is found the pride of Babylon as a self-confident, enduring queen who knows no defeat in war or poverty as a result of it. In the OT, the metaphor of the widow is used for vanquished cities and nations destroyed by war (Isa. 47:9; Isa. 54:4; Lam. 1:1). Widowhood is the common consequence of wars. It connotes poverty, destitution, and exploitation (Job 22:8-9; Isa. 10:1-2; Ezek. 22:7; Lk. 18:1-5).⁵⁶ But the mega-whore will have none of these, so she says in her heart. She sits as a queen with all wealth, luxury, and power (Ezek. 28:5).⁵⁷ She reigns victorious in war and prosperous in peace. She has never seen a day of need, for she is self-sufficient. The day shall not come when she loses her power and resources. It is a picture of pride and idolatry.

For this reason, the voice from heaven says, she will get precisely what she denies, and in no time at all. The *πληγαί*, “plagues” will come *ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ*, “in one day,” which alludes to Isa. 47:9, where the destruction of Babylon was to happen “in one day.” Her doom comes so suddenly that there is no prior warning and no further delay.⁵⁸ The plagues may come after an environmental catastrophe of hailstones and a great earthquake (16:18-21), causing, *θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός*, “death, mourning and famine” (cf. 18:7), and burning up *ἐν πυρὶ*, “with fire.” The language, however, depicts the confinement of a city in war. The theme of war is the focus of the four horsemen, fulfilling the first four seals—“to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth” (6:8).⁵⁹ After an extended blockade, pestilence and famine

⁵¹ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 715.

⁵² Mounce, *Revelation*, 328; Beale, *The Book*, 901.

⁵³ Osborne stresses double penalty at the same time, citing double retaliation in the OT. Osborne, *Revelation*, 641.

⁵⁴ Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1969), 217.

⁵⁵ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 994.

⁵⁶ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 996.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Revelation*, 567.

⁵⁸ Morris, *The Revelation*, 218.

⁵⁹ Osborne, *Revelation*, 645.

come upon the city's inhabitants (cf. 2 Ki. 6:24-31). With famine comes death and mourning of the dead. Burning fire connotes final destruction (Jer. 34:22).⁶⁰

An illuminating pericope is the lament of the kings, maritime merchants, and maritime merchants/mariners in 18:9-20. When the kings see the smoke of Babylon's burning, they shall declare that, μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου, "[in] one hour, your judgment has come" (18:10). The phrase, μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, "one hour," means a short-lived time signifying swift devastation (cf. 17:10; 18:10, 17, 19). The aorist indicative, ἦλθεν, "has come," signifies completed action in summary fashion. There is no stopping it.

The lament of the maritime merchants reflects the effect of Babylon's destruction. The reason is, τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἀγοράζει οὐκέτι, "no one buys no longer their cargo" (18:11). The economy of Babylon shall crash. As the demand declines, the supply is stifled, resulting to economic loss. Addressing bankrupt Babylon, the merchants declare that, ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ, "the ripe fruit of the strong desire of your soul has departed from you." J. Roloff takes the fruit literally, supposing that it nowhere belongs to the cargo of luxury goods.⁶¹ In light of the context however, ripe fruit signifies the luxurious things that make life comfortable (cf. 18:12-14). It is the pursuit of happiness through the luxurious life that defines the soul of Babylon. The comfy life includes, πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ, "all the luxury and the splendor," which are, ἀπώλετο ἀπὸ σοῦ, "lost from you." The two aorists, ἀπῆλθεν, "departed," and ἀπώλετο, "lost," builds on the aorist, ἦλθεν, "has come," in 18:10, indicating that the accomplished outcome of the judgment is the loss of the good life. The glitter and glamour of Babylon shall depart from her and perish with her. To seal the inevitable loss of Babylon's luxurious life, the last phrase is forceful and negative—οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὕρησουσιν, "no longer, no, not ever, shall they themselves find [it]" (18:10)! The intensive plural pronoun, αὐτὰ, "they [themselves]," seems to imply an attempt by Babylon's minions to recover their losses. Yet Babylon's economic loss shall be irreversible and permanent.

The maritime merchants repeat the same swift judgment against Babylon, bewailing that, μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος, "[in] one hour so much wealth has been destroyed" (18:17). The noun, πλοῦτος, "wealth," refers to material prosperity literally, given the heavily economic motif of the chapter. The aorist indicative, ἠρημώθη, "destroyed," is from ἐρημόομα, which denotes utter destruction, desolation, or devastation. In the context, the passive voice would indicate both internal (the beast and ten kings) and external (earthquake and hail) factors that will demolish Babylon—all caused by the sovereign work of God (cf. 16:18-21; 17:17; 18:20). Resounding with the trade theme of the context, it is Babylon's wealth that shall melt down in the worst unprecedented economic crisis in history. The worldwide financial crises in history are nothing compared to the coming commercial catastrophe of Babylon.

The final lament of the composite group of maritime merchants/mariners is similar to the lament of the maritime merchants in bewailing the economic meltdown. But the final lament is distinct in two ways. (1) Compared to the merchants' lament, the subject of the maritime merchants'/mariners' lament shifts from, ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος,

⁶⁰ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 996.

⁶¹ Jurgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 207.

“such great wealth” of Babylon (18:17), το, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, “the great city,” herself (18:19). (2) The last lament is followed by a call for rejoicing in 18:20.

Charles engages in textual gymnastics by restoring 18:20 after 18:23. Mounce sees the shift from lament to joy as part of the fluidity of the Apocalypse. Aune thinks that this abrupt interruption is an additional insert. Similarly, Roloff posits that the insert is John’s comments.⁶² Yet it is uncharacteristic of John and incongruous with the flow of the angelic presentation. It is also unlikely that the last group would engage in a kind of schizophrenic double-talk, lamenting over Babylon’s destruction in 18:19 and then rejoicing over it in 18:20. The call to rejoice is given typically by a heavenly voice and addressed to heavenly inhabitants (cf. 12:12; 19:1-4). Most likely then, it is either the angel of 18:1 or the voice of 18:4 that gives the call in 18:20. If the composite group is the speaker of the first part (18:19), but not the second part (18:20), then the group’s lament breaks off at 18:19 and the angelic voice takes over in 18:20.

Taken together, John thus includes two reasons for the final lament and the call for heaven and earth to rejoice (cf. Jer. 51:48). These two reasons are introduced by the subordinating conjunction, ὅτι, “for.” The mariners wail for the great city, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη, “for [in] one hour [she] has been destroyed” (18:19). Heaven and earth shall thus rejoice, ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς, “for God has judged [her] the judgment of you from [out of] her” (18:20).

Either the difficult last clause of 18:20 is translated as, “God has given judgment for you against her” (ESV)! or more literally, “God has judged [her] the judgment of you from her.” The latter is preferable. The first genitive, τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν, “the judgment of you,” is construed as an objective genitive. The verbal idea in the head noun, “judgment,” becomes a verb making the genitive, “of you,” its direct object.⁶³ Hence, “the judgment of you” becomes, “judging you” or “judging against you.” Also, the articular noun, τὸ κρίμα, “the judgment,” identifies the same judgment—or even double that, following the law of retribution—that is to be paid back to Babylon (cf. 18:6-7),⁶⁴ as vindication for the saints and martyrs, which parallels 6:10 and 19:2. Though the verb, ἔκρινεν, “judged,” speaks of justice, and not vengeance, as Morris insists,⁶⁵ the context suggests both justice and vengeance, with the use of the word, ἐκδικέω, “to vindicate; to avenge,” in 6:10 and 19:2. Death is to be returned to her for the death she has caused the saints and martyrs. The application of the law of reprisal and the use of the preposition, ἐξ + the genitive, αὐτῆς would make the genitive, ἐξ αὐτῆς, a genitive of separation—“from [out of] her.”⁶⁶ Thus, heaven and earth is called to rejoice, because God has judged Babylon from her judging against the saints. He shall vindicate his people for Babylon’s sin against her.

⁶² Charles, *A Critical*, 353; Mounce, *Revelation*, 336; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1006-1007; Roloff, *The Revelation*, 207.

⁶³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 116-117.

⁶⁴ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1008; Caird, *The Revelation*, 229-230; Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 500. Aune’s translation: “God judged the condemnation of you by her.” Caird: “God has judged your judgment from her.” Beale: “he judged the great harlot and vindicated the blood of his servants from her hand.” Beale, *The Book*, 916. Smalley: “God has given judgement against her for condemning you.” Smalley, *The Revelation*, 460.

⁶⁵ Morris, *Revelation*, 222.

⁶⁶ Wallace, *Greek*, 108. With Aune, it is not a genitive of source. But against Aune, it is not a genitive of agency or instrument (“by her”) either. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1008.

There appears then a chiasmic structure in the four “fors” (ὄτι), as follows.

A ὄτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου

“for [in] one hour, your judgment has come” (18:10).

B ὄτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος

“for [in] one hour so much wealth has been destroyed” (18:17).

B1 ὄτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη

“for [in] one hour [she] has been destroyed” (18:19).

A1 ὄτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς

“for God has judged [her] the judgment of you from [out of] her” (18:20)!

The chiasm gives one composite message for the fall of Babylon. God has judged Babylon swiftly—in divine retribution for the condemnation that she deserved; and totally—in divine vindication of his people.

Our final text is 18:21, which sets the tone for the destruction of Babylon in dramatic fashion. In a symbolic act, a mighty angel picked up what looked like a huge millstone and threw it into the sea, signifying the violent overthrow of Babylon. John’s record of this act mirrors similar symbolic acts recorded in the OT prophets, reinforcing the prophetic nature of Revelation. That the fall of Babylon is still future is indicated in future indicative, βληθήσεται, “shall be thrown,” in the angel’s prophecy—οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, “thus with sudden violence shall the great city Babylon be thrown” (18:21). This statement alludes to Jer. 51:63-64 (28:63-64, LXX). There, Jeremiah commands Seraiah to bind a stone to the book and throw it into the Euphrates, signifying the sinking of Babylon. John adapts Jeremiah’s parable into an image of angelic drama, which serves to sharpen the reader’s view of the image according to his eschatological view of it.⁶⁷ In presenting an apocalyptic figure of an angel throwing a large millstone into the sea, John thus projected an eschatological overthrow of Babylon. The dative noun, ὀρμήματι, “sudden violence,” signifies an action involving an abrupt, rapid force. Babylon shall be suddenly and forcefully cast down. Her systemic evil shall be swiftly stopped with sudden force. The next clause sets the manner of the desolation of Babylon—καὶ οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῆ ἔτι, “and shall not be found any more” (18:21). The double negative, οὐ μὴ, “no not,” is reinforced with the negative adverb, ἔτι, “any more [no longer].” The force is illuminating. The violent overthrow of Babylon shall totally erase her from the annals of history and geography.

John repeats the use of the adverb, ἔτι, “any more [no longer],” no less than six times in various motifs in the pericope, indicating emphasis. Thus, the sound of musicians shall be heard ἔτι, “no longer.” The craftsman will be found ἔτι, “no longer.” The sound of the mill shall be heard ἔτι, “no longer” (18:22). The light of a lamp will shine ἔτι, “no longer.” The voice of the wedding couple shall be heard ἔτι, “no longer” (18:23). The motif of the musicians’ sound alludes to Isa. 24:8 and Ezek. 26:13, where judgment is proclaimed against Tyre. The mill sound, lamp light, and wedding couple depend on Jer. 25:10, where Israel shall no longer experience it when Nebuchadnezzar comes to destroy her.

What is apparent in Revelation is that John presents his apocalyptic prophecies in a contextualized frame. His prophecies are rooted in history. The symbolism of Revelation then is not projected as abstract images for symbolic consumption, but really

⁶⁷ Bauckham, *The Climax*, 185.

as the method of making a prophetic statement on their special meaning.⁶⁸ Thus, the motifs are cast in first century realities (harpist, flute players, trumpeters, craftsman, mill, lamplight), but they are also set in eschatological outlook. Joy is linked with the sound of musicians (cf. Isa. 24:8; 1 Macc. 3:45). The loss of music signifies the loss of joy and city life in Babylon. The presence of craftsmen signifies economic activity. The loss of craftsmen connotes no supply of goods and stoppage of buying and selling, resulting to an economic crash in Babylon. Household hand mills were a necessity in the ancient world (Deut. 24:6).⁶⁹ The home-based hand mill was the basic food machine, and the home, the food factory. The mill sound then signifies food, since people grounded grain into flour using mills to produce bread. That there will no longer be the sound of the mill signifies food shortage and famine. The glow of a lamp light is a sign of life and people. No flickering lamplight means, no more oil supply.⁷⁰ If a single lamp will no longer shine, then all lights in Babylon shall be doused,⁷¹ leaving everyone in darkness. The voice of the wedding couple is a portent of joyful pleasure and future prosperity (Jer. 33:11).⁷² That the voices of the bride and the bridegroom will be heard no longer in Babylon is a harbinger of gloom and poverty. All the motifs paint a picture of a future dead city. The hearers of John may have seen the great city of Rome in all its beautiful music, elegant crafts, abundant food supply, countless lights, and merry weddings. Yet they now see an eschatological city whose sudden end is imminent (cf. 17:16).

Conclusion

John utilizes first century realities while projecting apocalyptic imagery with prophetic meaning. The imagery of Babylon is thus based on the great city of Rome and her empire, as she sits on many nations. The mega-whore's ride on the back of the beast reveals that her corrupting influence ultimately comes from satanic forces.

In her illicit intercourse with the beast, Babylon revels in blasphemous self-glory. She clothes herself with depraved power and exploitative wealth. As the mother of abominations, she embodies all forms of idolatry and immorality. Babylon is thus the political, economic, and religious cross-cultural system marked by religious apostasy, idolatry, immorality, economic greed, and unbridled power. It thrives in self-indulgence, self-boasting, injustice, ungodly lifestyles, resistance to the gospel, and violent oppression of the saints.

Therefore, she shall drink from the wrath of God and be paid back double for her deeds. God shall vindicate his people by judging Babylon for her judgment against the saints. God shall destroy her through the treachery of her own consorts, environmental disaster, and economic impoverishment. As her influence was universal, so her destruction shall be total, forever erasing her from history. John's vision of the imminent fall of Babylon assumes the existence of this world order throughout history, but also anticipates her future destruction.

In TV, movies, and the internet today, we see the extent of people getting drunk with the wine of Babylon's immorality and the forsaking of godly values. The pursuit of

⁶⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax*, 351.

⁶⁹ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1009.

⁷⁰ Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 502.

⁷¹ Charles, *A Critical*, 111.

⁷² Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1008

profit, driven by the greed of consumer nations, worsens the poverty of poorer nations and destroys the environment. The idol of materialistic self-indulgence stands opposed to the gospel of the kingdom for the poor. Babylon continues to trample those who proclaim the testimony of the Lamb. Those who engage in illicit relations with her shall therefore face the judgment of God.

When we tolerate theological apostasy and engage in the economic idolatry of Babylon, we become partners of her prostitution. When our prosperity and success creates a form of self-glory, drawing us away from the glory of God, we are already drinking the wine of Babylon. The call is clear in Revelation—come out of her rather than compromise with her (cf. 18:4-5). Far better it is to stay out than get out. In that this present Babylon anticipates an eschatological Babylon that God shall destroy eventually, John's vision warns believers today to disengage from her pleasures and resist her attraction even to the point of suffering for the testimony of the Lamb.

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