

Destroying the Destroyers of the Earth

Thomas Robinson, *Apocalypse Today* 7, July 15, 2018

Revelation 15:5 - 19:10

Seven angels pour out seven bowls of plagues.

15:⁵ After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent/tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, [Ex 27:21; Lev 1:1; Act 7:44] ⁶ and the seven angels with the seven plagues, came out of the sanctuary clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden belts around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the passion of God who lives into the ages of ages. ⁸ And the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter into the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. [Ex 12:13; 40:34-35]

16:¹ Then I heard a great voice from the sanctuary telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the passion of God onto the earth."

[1] ² So the first departed and poured his bowl onto the earth, and harmful and evil sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. [Ex 9:9-10]

[2] ³ The second poured his bowl into the sea, and it became blood as from a corpse, and every soul with life died of things in the sea. [Ex 7:19-21; Rev 8:8-9; 11:6]

[3] ⁴ The third poured his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "

You are righteous – the Holy one who is and who was – for you judged these things,

⁶ because they poured out the blood of holy people and prophets,

so you gave them blood to drink. It's what they're worthy of!" [Rev 17:6; 18:24]

⁷ And I heard the altar itself saying,

"Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments!" [Rev 19:2]

[4] ⁸ The fourth poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch those people by fire. ⁹ The people were scorched by great heat, and they blasphemed the name of the God who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give him glory.

[5] ¹⁰ The fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the wild beast, and his kingdom became darkened, and they began to bite their tongues from their distress ¹¹ and they blasphemed the God of heaven from their distresses and from their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.

[6] ¹² The sixth poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the road for the kings from the rising of the sun. ¹³ And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the serpent-dragon and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet (the second beast), three unclean spirits like frogs. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, that go out to the kings of the whole inhabited world, to gather them for the war of the great day of God the Almighty.

¹⁵ "Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who is keeping watch and holding on to his garments [Rev 3:4-5], that he may not walk naked and his shame be seen!" [1Th 5:2; Mt 24:42-43]

¹⁶ And they gathered them to the place that in Hebrew is called "Armageddon." [Cf 2Kg 23:29]

The seventh bowl points to the climax: Judgment on the great imperial city.

[7] ¹⁷ The seventh poured out his bowl into the air, and a great voice went forth out of the sanctuary, from the throne, saying, "It has happened!" ¹⁸ And flashes of lightning happened, and noises and peals of thunder, and a great earthquake happened such as had never happened since a human came to exist on the earth, so gigantic was that earthquake.

¹⁹ And it happened that the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the great was remembered before God, so as to give to her the cup of the wine of the passion of his wrath. [Rev 14:8] ²⁰ And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. ²¹ And great hailstones, about a talent in weight, fell from heaven on the people; and they blasphemed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was exceedingly great.

John sees the judgment in a different form: Judgment on the great Harlot.

17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot (*porné*) who is seated on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed immorality, and those who settled down on the earth became drunken from the wine of her immorality."

³ And he carried me away into a desert in Spirit, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of names of blasphemy, and it had seven heads and ten horns. [Rev 12:3; 13:1; Dan 7:7]

⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stones and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her immorality. [Jer 51:7] ⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery:

"Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

⁶ And I saw the woman, drunken from the blood of the the holy people and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled when I saw her with great amazement.

John learns that the Harlot "Babylon" riding the Beast is imperial Rome.

⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why were you amazed? I'll tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the wild beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the abyss and go to destruction. And the ones who will be amazed are those who have settled down upon the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life that is from the foundation of the world, when they behold the wild beast, because it was and is not and is arriving."

⁹ The mind that has wisdom is needed here: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings/emperors: the five fell; the one is, the other did not yet come, and when he come he must remain only a little. ¹¹ And the beast that was and is not, he is also an eighth, and he is from the seven, and into destruction he goes. ¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who did not yet receive a kingdom, but they are receiving authority as kings for one hour, with the beast. ¹³ These have one purpose, and they are giving their power and authority to the beast.

¹⁴ They will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will be victorious over them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

¹⁵ And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns that you saw, they and the wild

beast will hate the harlot, and they will make her desolate and naked, and they will eat the pieces of her flesh and burn her down with fire. [1Kg 21:23-24] ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose and to accomplish one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be completed.

¹⁸ And the woman that you saw is the great city that has a kingdom/empire over the kings of the earth."

Judgment: The fall of Babylon – of Rome – of every empire is proclaimed.

18:¹ After this I saw another angel coming down from the heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated from his glory. ² And he called out with a mighty voice,

"She fell; she fell, Babylon the great! [Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; Isa 21:9; Jer 51:8]

She has become a dwelling place of demons, a cage for every unclean spirit, a cage for every unclean bird, and a cage for every unclean and hated beast. ³ For from the wine of the passion of her immorality have all the nations drunk [Isa 51:17-23; Jer 51:7], and the kings of the earth committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury."

⁴ Then I heard another voice from the heaven saying, "Come out from her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you receive some of her plagues; [Jer 51:8, 45; Isa 48:20] ⁵ for her sins were piled high as the heaven, and God has remembered her acts of injustice. ⁶ Give back to her as she herself has given, and repay her double for her deeds. In the cup where she mixed wine, mix double for her. [Jer 50:29] ⁷ As much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of pain and grief, because in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen! I'm no widow, and I'll surely never see grief!' ⁸ For this reason, in one day her plagues will come – death and grief and famine – and she will be burned down by fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her." [Isa 47:7-9]

The powerful and wealthy grieve over losing the advantages of empire.

⁹ And the kings of the earth will weep and beat their breasts over her – those who committed immorality with her and lived in luxury – when they see the smoke of her burning.

¹⁰ Standing far off, for fear of her torment, they'll say, "Woe! Oh Woe! The great city, Babylon, the mighty city! For in a single hour your judgment came!"

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth are weeping and grieving over her, because no one is buying their cargo anymore,

¹² cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble,

¹³ cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and carriages, and bodies (slaves), that is, souls of humans.

¹⁴ "The fruit that your soul desired has gone from you, and all the luxuries and the splendors have perished for you, never to be found again!"

¹⁵ The merchants of these wares, who grew rich from her, will stand far off, for fear of her torment, crying and grieving, ¹⁶ "Woe! Oh Woe! The great city that was clothed in fine linen, and in purple and scarlet, gilded with gold, and precious stones, and with pearls! ¹⁷ Because in a single hour so much wealth was laid waste!"

And all shipmasters and coastal traders, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸ and began crying out when they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" ¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads and cried out as they wept and grieved, "Woe! Oh Woe! The great city, where all who had ships on the sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she was laid waste."

²⁰ "Be glad over her, Heaven, and the holy people, and the apostles and prophets, because God rendered the judgment on her that she gave against you!"

²¹ Then one mighty angel lifted a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "With such force will Babylon the great city be thrown down, and will never again be found. [Jer 51:63-64] ²² and the sound of lyre players and musicians and flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, ²³ and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more [Jer 16:9], because your merchants were the great men of the earth, because by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones, and blood of all who have been slain upon earth."

The heavenly throng celebrates the judgment on the destructive empire.

19:¹ After these things, I heard what seemed to be the powerful voice of a great multitude in the heaven, saying,

"Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God,

² for true and righteous are his judgments;

for he judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged the blood of his servants that flowed from her hand."

³ Again they said, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her destruction rises into the ages of ages."

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

⁵ And a voice from the throne went forth saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, the small and the great!"

⁶ Then I heard what seemed like a voice of a great multitude, like a voice of many waters and like a voice of mighty peals of thunder, shouting,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty is King."

⁷ Let us rejoice and celebrate and give him the glory,

because the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready. [Rev 21:9; Isa 54:5]

⁸ And it was granted her to clothe herself in fine linen, brilliant and pure, for the fine linen is the just acts of God's holy people."

⁹ And he says to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the banquet of the marriage of the Lamb!" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

¹⁰ And I fell down before his feet to worship him, but he says to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and sisters who hold the testimony borne by Jesus. Worship God!" For that testimony borne by Jesus is the very Spirit of prophecy.

Revelation 11:17-18

¹⁴ “We give thanks to you, LORD God Almighty, | the one who is and who was, | because you have ... established your kingdom. | ¹⁸ The nations were wrathful, but your wrath came, | and the time for the dead to be judged, | and to reward your servants, the prophets and saints, | and those who fear your name, the small and the great, | and to destroy the destroyers of the earth.”

Revelation 19:11, 13-16

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, ... ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in the heaven were following him on white horses, arrayed in fine linen. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes forth a sharp sword in order that he may strike the nations with it, and he himself will shepherd them with an iron staff, and he himself treads the winepress for the wine of the passion of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Passion and the Wrath of God

John’s visions lead us through cycles of 7 looking at the world in different ways, unfolding images of its deceptive appearance and deep, corrupt reality. Seeing the Gospel as Counter-Reality.

We see a door to God’s throne, the slain Lamb. Seals reveal human destructive forces, earth’s response and what it means. Trumpets show the failure of a destructive vengeance and the pattern of following the Lamb. What does God want? His passion is to save his creation from destruction, to give life! The other side of that is to stop/destroy the destroyers of the earth.

John sees this in the vision of the Serpent-Dragon/Satan, the Wild Beast, the Second Beast (false prophet). The dragon defeated from heaven, rages on earth. The Beast, forces of empire.

The Second Beast deceives the world: Power, wealth, violence are the only reality. The mark.

Babylon – Imperial City, Great Harlot, Riding the Beast

God’s judgment is first seen in 7 bowls of plagues like Exodus. But no repentance, learning.

Plagues 5-7 point toward a new vision: Beast’s throne, Euphrates, Babylon the Great.

John sees the judgment in different form: Great Harlot (porné), scarlet Beast (all empires, Dan).

Power over peoples, wealth and luxury, trade, corrupting the world. Blood of witnesses.

John yields to amazement. No need. This is Rome, on 7 hills, emperors, kings, dominance.

Rome is rising to greater power in John’s time, but his vision pronounces her fall, like Babylon.

Rome’s empire embodies the deception of power and wealth. It will not last. Collapse!

Believers are urged to anticipate the collapse of the deception, see reality that lasts.

Tears for Babylon’s Fall – So much wealth! And Shouts of Joy

We see John’s vivid vision of reactions to Babylon’s (Rome’s) fall. Kings, Merchants, Shippers, all cry Woe! But stand far off. No real friends. End of so much power. So quickly!

Especially the Merchants and Traders grieve for their lost sales of wares. The empire had a super-wealthy luxury class that supported expensive trade. We hear the list of commodities that ends with “bodies”=slaves, now seen as “souls of humans.” Rome’s military power was the basis of great wealth. God judges the deception. It does not last. It falls in a moment.

In contrast, life and faithfulness abounds for those who have suffered imperial injustice and violence. Celebration for the marriage of the Lamb and Bride – the union of God and humanity – the creation of true lasting life, the hope that runs through all prophecy – Jesus!