

## Remembering the Genre and Audience of the Revelation of John

<sup>1</sup> *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup> *who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.* (Revelation 1:1-2 ESV)*

- **Apocalypse:** Reveals that which is hidden—namely the spiritual realm of existence undiscernible through human wisdom.
- **Prophecy:** Foretelling and forth-telling—Describing future events in order to speak to the present.
- **Letter:** There is a specific audience with a specific context that speaks to the Church at large.

Revelation generally speaks of future events that at times reflects/sheds light on past events and this current age—namely the cross and its impact on the church.

<sup>14</sup> *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.* <sup>15</sup> *So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ...* <sup>20</sup> *But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.* <sup>21</sup> *I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* <sup>22</sup> *Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,* <sup>23</sup> *and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.* (Revelation 2:14-15, 20-23 ESV)

The false teaching of the Nicolaitans, symbolized by Balaam and propagated by a false prophet referred to as Jezebel, was likely early forms of Gnosticism that embraced an evil/good dualism between the physical and the spiritual that allowed for Christians to participate in the surrounding idolatrous culture to avoid economic and social losses. Ultimately, Gnosticism denied the God of the Bible and justified sin under the guise of Christian liberty. In short, they sought to be friends of God and the world at the same time.

## Babylon is a false and doomed kingdom despite its temporary success. (17:1-18)

### *Understanding John's Vision: Laying the Groundwork*

#### 1. The prostitute contradicts the pure bride of Christ (cf. Rev. Ch. 12 & 21)

Both are pictured as women in the wilderness and by the cities they live in and for, but their ends could not be more different.

#### 2. Babylon the Great, like the tribulation, the antichrist, and the kingdom of God exists in an already/not yet framework.

Babylon symbolically refers to the future capital city of Satan's kingdom in the future, but it also speaks to any "of the oppressive kingdoms of the world that disregard and do not recognize Christ as King" (Jim Hamilton). These kingdoms elevate wealth, sensuality, and idolatry as they persecute, and even kill the people of God, so that they have the appearance of luxury and power, but in the end, prove to be naked and desolate.

#### 3. The passage interprets the symbols of the vision for you.

Unfortunately, there is still much difficulty in understanding the meaning of those explanations, but what is clear is that the beast will be defeated by Christ while those who follow the beast will be tormented by the very things to which they devoted their lives.

## Understanding John's Vision: Understanding the Particulars

### 1. **The Prostitute:** The heart of Satan's Kingdom (the world) and those who live for it.

The Great Prostitute, as already mentioned, serves as the counter picture to the pure bride of Christ who inhabits New Jerusalem. Simply put, she represents the world—that which was created to be devoted to God, but instead aligned itself with Satan. She is the heart of his kingdom. Instead of being honored as a bride, however, she is shamed as a prostitute. She has the appearance of wealth and power, but that's all it is—an appearance.

### 2. **Many Waters:** All nations—mirroring the Kingdom of Christ.

Every single political nation on this planet is given to the allure of Babylon. Every one of these kingdoms, as Jim Hamilton puts it, "pursues their own glory, their own name, their own purposes, all the while ignoring God's law, God's glory, and God's purposes." In the end, for the kingdoms of this world, money, pleasure, and wickedness win the day instead of the righteousness and justice of God.

"The intoxicating effect of Babylon's wine removes all desire to resist Babylon's destructive influence, blinds them to their ultimate insecurity and to God as the source of security, and numbs them against a fear of a coming judgment." – G.K. Beale

### 3. **Beast:** The Antichrist.

### 4. **Seven Heads:** Seven mountains and seven kings or kingdoms.

Kingdoms A	Kingdoms B	Kings B	Kings A
1. Egypt	1. Egypt	1-5. Roman emperors before Domitian.	Julius Caesar (44 BC)
2. Assyria	2. Assyria	6. Domitian	Augustus (27 BC-14 AD)
3. Babylon	3. Babylon	7. The short-lived reign of Roman tyranny after Domitian.	Tiberius (14-37 AD)
4. Persia	4. Persia		<b>Caligula (37-41) (1)</b>
5. Greece	5. Greece		<b>Claudius (41-54) (2)</b>
6. Rome	6. Rome		<b>Nero (54-68) (3)</b>
7. Antichrist	7. Symbolic for the fullness of the kingdoms of the earth after Rome.		Galbo, Otho, Vitellius (68-69)
8. Antichrist	8. Antichrist		<b>Vespasian (69-79) (4)</b>
			<b>Titus (79-81) (5)</b>
			<b>Domitian (81-96) (6)</b>
			Nerva (96-98)
			<b>Trajan (98-117) (7)</b>

In the end, what is clear is that these seven heads oppress God's people, but their time is short.

### 5. **10 Horns:** Vassal kings of the earth who align themselves with the beast against Christ.

Whether taken to be literally 10 or symbolic of a larger number, every king of the earth will gather with the beast against Christ, see Rev. 16:14.

**While Satan ravages and despises his followers, Christ loves, protects, and confers honor, worth, and dignity to his people. They are chosen and faithful.**

*Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.* (Genesis 4:7b ESV)

### Message to the Church:

1. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great." 18:1-3
2. "Come out of her my people!" 18:4-5