

## Chapter 16: Seven Plagues of God’s Wrath

Taking a broad view of this chapter in context with the preceding chapters, we return to the scene right before the Lord’s Second Coming, but from a different perspective. Like a sculpture in a museum that is placed in the middle of the room, we return to look at these events from different angles four times. God’s punishments via plagues, have already been discussed in chapters 8, 9, and 14. Different symbols are used each time. Here, in chapter 16, God’s recompense is delivered through the content of the vials or bowls, similar to the plagues from chapters 8-9 and Moses in Egypt (Ex 7-12).

Furthermore, we can find even more consistent patterns of the numbers. Don and Jay Parry observed:

The first seals are linked together into a unified group of four (four seals, four horses, four horsemen, four statements from four beasts), while the final three seals belong to a second group. This pattern of one group of four and one group of three parallels that pattern set forth for the seven trumpets (Rev 8-9) and the seven vials (Rev 16).<sup>1</sup>

John’s apocalypse views the last days emphasizes the severity of these seven plagues before Christ’s return.

### The First Six Plagues (Rev 16:1-16)

**Rev 16:1 “I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels . . .”**

(NR) A call to action comes again from the heavenly temple which assures us that God is in His temple carefully directing His plan. The imagery echoes Isaiah, “a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies” (Isa 66:6).

**“Go and pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth”** (NR) God’s wrath is mentioned at least twenty-five times in the NT, but we see it enacted best in the Book of Revelation. He is not only a just God who issues punishments, but also a passionate God who weeps, denounces, loves, and empathizes. His wrath will be especially keen on those who have harmed children and persecuted the righteous.<sup>ii</sup> Also, God chastens those whom He loves (Heb 12:6; Prov 3:12). We can find comfort in knowing that even though God refers to Himself as a “jealous God,” His pure motives are for our good (Ex 34:14; Moses 1:39).

<b>Moses’ Ten Plagues</b>
1. Turn water to blood (Ex 7:14-24)
2. Frogs (Ex 8:2-15)
3. Lice or gnats (Ex 8:16-19)
4. Swarms of flies (Ex 8:21-32)
5. Pestilence of livestock (Ex 9:1-7)
6. Boils people/animals (Ex 9:8-12)
7. Thunderstorm hail+fire (Ex9:22-6)
8. Locust (Ex 10:1-20)
9. Darkness 3 days (Ex 10:21-29)
10. Death of firstborn (Ex11:1-12:36)

<b>Plagues</b>	
<b>Revelation 8+9</b>	<b>Revelation 16</b>
1. <u>Rev 8:7</u> Hail fire =Moses’ 7 <sup>th</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:2</u> *Grievous Sores =Moses’ 6 <sup>th</sup> plague
2. <u>Rev 8:8-9</u> Mt falls into <b>Sea to blood</b> =Moses’ 1 <sup>st</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:3</u> <b>Sea to blood</b> =Moses’ 1 <sup>st</sup> plague
3. <u>Rev 8:10-11</u> Star Poisons fresh water =Moses’ 1 <sup>st</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:4</u> Rivers to blood =Moses’ 1 <sup>st</sup> plague
4. <u>Rev 8:12</u> Darkness, dims sun/sky =Moses’ 9 <sup>th</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:8</u> Heat and Fire (Deut 28:22)
5. <u>Rev 9:2</u> Dark smoke into painful locust=Moses’ 8 <sup>th</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:9</u> Darkness-Pain =Moses’ 9 <sup>th</sup> plague
6. <u>Rev 9:13-19</u> Euphrates, 1/3 humans die=Moses’ 10 <sup>th</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:12</u> Euphrates, 3 frogs/unclean =Moses’ 2 <sup>nd</sup> plague
7. <u>Rev 11:19</u> Lighten, earthquake, hail =Moses’ 7 <sup>th</sup> plague	<u>Rev 16:18</u> Lightning, earthquake, hail=Moses’ 7 <sup>th</sup> plague

**Rev 16:2 “The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast”** (NIV) The first angel’s plague is grievous sores, which are also described in other scriptures. Zechariah 14:12 describes similar epidemics of the flesh: “Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (also D&C 29:19). We live in a world that causes painful sores from atomic fallout, pollutions, addictions, diseases, cancers, and drugs. This may also refer to spiritual or emotional sores

Those that do not have the mark of the beast will \*escape, in part because they “have faith in the Lord and who exercise the power of the priesthood to rebuke the evils that otherwise would afflict them.”<sup>iii</sup> Yet, the saints will not be spared from all the plagues of the last days, at least the text does not include it for the others.

**Rev 16:3 “The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it turned into blood . . . and every living thing that was in the sea died”** (NR) Like Moses and the Egyptian waters, blood will fill the seas, or perhaps the sea life will die in the last days (also Ezekiel 32:6; Rev 17:1). The Lord also taught the Prophet Joseph Smith,

There are many dangers upon the waters, and more especially hereafter; for I, the Lord have decreed in mine anger many destructions upon the waters . . . by the mouth of my servant John, I cursed the waters.

Wherefore, the days will come that no flesh shall be safe upon the waters (D&C 61:4-5, 15).

The ancients identified matter in the four elements of air, fire, water, and earth. We see that in their plagues. A different angel controlled each different element starting in Rev 7:1—air, Rev 14:18—fire, and here, water.<sup>iv</sup>

**Rev 16:4 “The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers . . . and they became blood”** (NR) We see many pollutants affecting our waters. In the twentieth century, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wondered, “perhaps we are seeing even now a little trickling prelude of what John foretold as we struggle to maintain the natural purity of our rivers and seas into which great floods of contaminating chemicals and stinking refuse are poured as men seek to rid themselves of the rubbish and garbage of our so-called civilization.”<sup>v</sup> In contrast to this deathly water, Jesus taught the woman at the well, “the water I give . . . will become . . . a spring of water welling up to eternal life;” and later in Jerusalem, “Whoever believes in me . . . has . . . rivers of living water . . . from within them” (Jn 4:14; 7:38).

**Rev 16:5-7 “I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus . . . I heard another *angel who came out from the altar saying: Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments*”** (JST) The JST clarified that it was an angel not an altar who spoke. The third angel expresses appreciation for God’s eternal omniscience and righteous judgment. We all will get what we deserve. The angel’s witness also communicates evidence of God’s active and continual involvement.

**Rev 16:8 “Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire . . . and [they] would not repent”** (NR) The scorching heat severely burned the wicked, but they do not humble themselves to acknowledge God’s hand. It seems to be a matter of pride, as they do not want to give God glory. Earlier when John described the angels around the throne of God, he said they were protected from “any scorching heat” (Rev 7:16, NIV). This plague of fire or heat is not just for the wicked.

**Rev 16:10-11 “The fifth angel poured out his bowl onto the throne of the beast, and its kingdom tuned dark, and they were gnawing their tongues in agony. They cursed God . . . yet they did not repent”** (NR) The plague will attack the devil’s throne or “power base of Satan.”<sup>vi</sup> The darkness will impede Lucifer’s ability to reign. An opposite of the last plague of a scorching sun, this plague brings darkness. The excruciating pain was described earlier in Rev 9, when out of the darkness came something that stung like a scorpion. The plague of darkness in Egypt represented the sun god, Ra, losing power. This darkness may refer to the lack of spiritual light that leaves one lost and in pain, or may refer to the pollutants and natural disasters that block the sun’s light. Whatever its cause, John emphasizes that the wicked will refuse to repent and “curse God,” which may include becoming atheists.

**Rev 16:12 “The sixth angel poured out his bowl into the great river Euphrates. And its water dried up to prepare the way of the kings of the east”** (NR) The plague of drought prepares for “the way of the kings.” This phrase is repeated four times in the OT—always referring to wicked Israel (2 Kings 8:18; 16:3; 2 Chr 21:6, 13). We also find two references in Num 20:17 and 21:22 to a “king’s highway.” In the past, the Euphrates River had been a barrier in the Middle East. This a future drying up may refer to opening that part of the world. Another interpretation of the Euphrates as the traditional cradle of civilization, Assyria and Babylon (who conquered Israel and Judea), which may suggest a symbolic view like drying up of enemies of God to make room for Christ’s divine reign.

**Rev 16:13-14 “I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon . . . beast, and . . . false prophet . . . demonic spirits who perform signs, who go forth to . . . gather them together for battle”** (NR) Three unclean spirits came from Satan’s trinity: the devilish dragon, his servants the beasts of the sea, and beast of the land (the latter was also a counterfeit horned lamb, now called a false prophet). The three spirits were “like frogs,” which were unclean animals in the Law of Moses, but were gods to the Egyptians at the time of Moses (Lev 11). Were the spirits froglike because they will come in three different phases—egg, tadpole, frog—or just an unclean animal?

John pointed out that the frogs come from the mouth of the dragon. As a counterfeit of “the Word,” these spirits spread evil. These demonic spirits spread unholiness and deception. They provide false signs that delude the rulers of the whole world. They spread lies and other forms of counterfeit truth. In contrast, the Savior had a sword coming from His mouth (Rev 1:16). A contemporary of John, the Jewish priest, general and historian, Josephus, associated evil spirits with the mouth.<sup>vii</sup>

**Rev 16:15 “I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and takes care of his clothing so that he does not have to walk around naked and the people see his shame”** (NR) The Lord is the first person, “I.” He gives another beatitude or blessing for those who watch or are on guard in preparation for His Coming. They are to keep and care for their “clothing / *himation* / a long flowing outer garment, tunic, or robe,”<sup>viii</sup> or possibly a sacred covering. John uses this word, “*himation* / garment” (KJV), seven times in Revelation. All of the other usages in the book are for

either God's sacred clothing or represent the saints' purity through clothing (Rev 3:4, 5, 18; 4:4; 19:13, 16). In the restored church, the saints also have sacred clothing that they are to keep and wear night and day.

The Lord's blessing is that they will not be "be shamefully exposed" (NIV) or indecent. In the Jewish world, being naked was horrendously humiliating. The clothing may also denote the Hebrew roots for "atone / *kaphar* / to cover."<sup>xix</sup> God will bless those who keep the covering of the atonement to not be ashamed at His Coming.

**Rev 16:16 "The spirits gathered the kings together at . . . Armageddon"** (NR) The unclean frog-like spirits work for Satan, but it all fits into God's plan for the great last battle to be held at Armageddon. Literally, the location, Armageddon, from the Bible, is 60 miles north of Jerusalem, at the base of Mount Carmel, between Galilee and Samaria. The valley that surrounds it has the most fertile plains in Israel also known as the Jezreel Valley. It was the location of many ancient battles from the OT (i.e. Zech 12:10-11).<sup>x</sup> Yet, this may not be what John meant, as it can also be translated, "his fruitful mountain," which may refer to other places including Jerusalem.<sup>xi</sup> We will have to wait to see. The Book of Mormon also refers to the great battle to come (1 Nephi 22:16-19; 2 Nephi 27:1-3).

### Seventh Plague (Rev 16:17-21)

**Rev 16:17-18 "The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, 'It is done!' And there were lightning bolts . . . and also a great earthquake"** (NR) This is the fifth time an earthquake is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, but this one is the most destructive. The seventh plague includes the worse natural disasters the world has ever known. Yet, they are all carried out under the miraculous timing of God's direction from His throne. We learn in modern revelation that this earthquake is so large that it will split the mount of Olives and the glorified Jesus will convert the Jews there (D&C 45:48-53).

**Rev 16:19-20 "The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell . . . Every island disappeared and no mountains were found"** (NR) The great city is probably Jerusalem, but it sounds as though all nations will be affected by the earthquake, as well as by horrific geographic destructions (also mentioned in D&C 133:21-24). The islands and mountains change. The Greek can be interpreted as they "ceased to exist as continents shifted and consumed them."<sup>xii</sup> Across scripture Babylon symbolizes worldliness, pride, and self-gratification. Finally, this division destroys her.

**Rev 16:21 "Large hail stones weighing about ninety pounds fell from the sky on people, and they cursed God . . ."** (NR) Unlike the hail that plagued Egypt under Moses, these stones of ice will weigh "a talent" or between 75 and 100 pounds or 45 kg each. We also read of similar violent natural disasters in Daniel 12:1, D&C 84:118, and 133:21-25. It may not be hail as we know it, but something that falls from heaven. John's point is that the wicked people will receive a harsher judgment than ever imagined. It will bring all to their knees—but they will still curse God. They will not repent because they love the things of this world.

Brigham Young observed that "God has given us the things of this world to see what we will do with them."<sup>xiii</sup> Hugh Nibley adds,

The test will be whether we will set our hearts on the four things that lead to destruction. Whoever seeks for (1) wealth, (2) power, (3) popularity and (4) the pleasures of the flesh, anyone who seeks those will be destroyed, says the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 22:23, 3 Nephi 6:15). Need we point out that those four things compose the whole substance of success in the present-day world? They are the things that money will get you.<sup>xiv</sup>

To avoid this satanic trap, we must live the principles taught in the Doctrine and Covenants on the Law of Consecration (D&C 42:30–36, 55; 104:13-15). Saints give of our time, energy, and substance to those in need. The underlying principle is that the earth is the Lord's and we need to act as stewards of His property for everything He gives us. We are accountable to Him. We can either choose to serve Him and share His gifts, or we can pretend they are ours.<sup>xv</sup>

## Chapters 17-18

John's greatest emphasis falls on the years right before the Second Coming of the Lord. The Lord gives him more symbols of selfish satanic decadence in the character of the whore. John describes her in chapter 17 through her destruction at Jesus' triumphal Second Coming. The satanic images of the beasts, whore, and Babylon, are a composite of all ungodly forces that work under the direction of Lucifer. They work together at times to attack God's truth, and then they destroy each other. In this section, John offers his interpretation as he narrates his visions.

## **The Whore Rides on the Devil-Beast (Rev 17:1-5)**

**Rev 17:1-2** “One of the seven angels . . . spoke . . . ‘Come, let me show you the condemnation of and punishment of the great whore that sits on many waters . . .’ (NR) Early we learned that the “woman” represented the church (Rev 12:1), and now we are introduced to her opposite or counterfeit: “the Great Whore.” The woman had a son, while the whore is barren. The whore represents Satanic forces, mother of harlots and abominations as the symbol of Babylon (which is the opposite of Zion). She rides on another beast. All of these beasts seem to overlap as satanic forces on the earth. We are not told if this beast is the fiery dragon who was described earlier as the devil with seven heads and ten horns (Rev 12:3; 13:1).<sup>xvi</sup>

When Nephi’s vision of the tree of life developed into the history of the world, he, too, saw “the whore.” Nephi does not describe the beast, but focuses on the whore as the “church of the devil.”

Whosoever belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth . . . and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters (1 Nephi 14:10-12; also see 22:22-23; 2 Nephi 10:16).

Both Nephi and John are consistent in describing the whore as wickedness, not an institution. Rev 17:15 explains that the “waters” here represent the peoples of the earth. She inebriates them with the vices of the devil and by abusing the Lord’s church. In Revelation there are only two ways: following God or following Satan. In the Book of Revelation truth and evil is always black or white.

**Rev 17:3-4** “He carried me in the spirit to a deserted place, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored beast that was filled with blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns . . . dressed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls, with a gold cup in her hand . . .” (NR). A deserted place is barren and has no life. John describes the whore’s clothes and the beast with the colors of scarlet and purple. Isaiah describes sin with the color “scarlet” (Isa 1:18). At the time of John, red and purple were very expensive dyes, and so were the colors worn by royalty, the elite or the wealthy (Mt 27:26-28; Heb 9:19).<sup>xvii</sup>

We see the whore’s forgery as she mimics temple attire. The stones may also counterfeit the high priest’s breastplate filled with twelve stones (Ex 28:15-20). The gold cup “filled with abominations” and sexual obscenities, mimics the gold cups used for wine offerings before God in Israelite temples (Ex 25:29). The great counterfeit is trying to appear like the great priest or king, but it is all a sham. The whore wears signs of wealth and worldliness but she is barren and can only go where the devil takes her. Sadly, nearly the whole world follows the whore, “committing economic, political, and religious immoralities for both pleasure and gain.”<sup>xviii</sup> She is alive and well in our society.

**Rev 17:5** “On her forehead was written, ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of Whores and of the Abominations of the Earth’ (NR) Six hundred years before John’s time, the nation Babylon conquered Jerusalem and most of the Mesopotamian world. After that it became a figurative word for all wickedness and worldliness. The whore represents a secular secret society and nurtures it. In our day she represents pornography, human trafficking, drug cartels, and other deceitful and dishonest peoples and practices.

**Rev 17:6** “I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints . . . martyrs of Jesus . . . and I was greatly amazed (NR) John has to observe the filth and insanity of it all, including the devil’s attacks on the righteous. The Whore is drunk, representing the inebriation of sin. Sin, like booze and drugs, has the ability to alter peoples’ minds to not see its foolishness.

### **Angel’s Explanation (Rev 17:7-13)**

**Rev 17:7-8** “The angel said to me, ‘Why are you amazed? I will tell you the mystery . . . the beast . . . is going . . . to destruction . . . because he was, and [now] is not, and will come’ (NR) While John is trying to understand all this, his angelic guide offers an explanation to the symbolism of the vision. The angel works backward starting with the beast in verse 8, and ending with the whore in verse 18.

John learns of another henchmen for Satan who will go to Perdition. It shares characteristics with the seven headed, ten horned beast from the abyss in chapter 13. The beast again opposes Christ, as an anti-Christ. John highlights the differences between the beast and Christ by using similar phrases to contrast them:

- “The beast . . . was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev 17:8)
- “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev 1:4).

We learn that even though the beast will be gone for a period, he will come back, “yet is.” While Jesus will return in glory for His Second Coming, so, too, the diabolical work of Lucifer will return after the Millennium. But that beastly force is only a brief reality; those who have not felt his temptations must overcome. Though, God has him under His control. Jesus, on the other hand, will eternally reign as “King of Kings” (Rev 17:14).

**“Whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world”** (NR) The Book of life has two meanings in scriptures:

1. Figuratively, the Book of Life “is the complete record of one’s life, the sum total of thoughts, words, and deeds written in the soul, of which the Lord will take account in the day of judgment.”<sup>xix</sup>
2. Ultimately, it records only those names who qualify for exaltation through the Lord’s sealing.

Christ will record the names of those who have been sealed by this great gift of God.<sup>xx</sup> Completing one’s saving ordinances is not enough, as “the Holy Spirit of Promise” will not ratify those who break their covenants (Eph 1:13; D&C 132:7, 18-19, 26; etc.). Those sealed learned to avoid the “beast’s allures,” with practice and developing spiritual sensitivity from valiant efforts in both the first and second estates.<sup>xxi</sup>

**Rev 17:9-10 “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come”** (NIV) The angel gives John a clue on how to understand the beast, but not an answer. We still must ponder, pray, and study to understand. Since Rome is built on seven hills, many have interpreted this as Rome. It may also be symbolic of complete corruption of the world centers or high places.

**Rev 17:11 “the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition”** (KJV) Many identify this beast as Domitian, the eighth Roman Emperor. But, by using the broader timing of seven thousand years of history as D&C 77 outlines, there are many other options. It may refer to a group or ideology rather than a specific person.

**Rev 17:12-13 “the ten horns . . . are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast”** (KJV) Horns represent “power.” These powerful things are unified together, all receiving their strength from the beast. As these they have no kingdom, I assume they are philosophies or theories that Satan empowers, not leaders of nations. Their day of glory is short-lived, or it is at least a limited time, as their unity includes a hatred of Christ.

#### Angel’s Explanation

17:8 —The beast . . . shall . . .  
 17:9 —The seven heads are . . .  
 17:12—The ten horns . . . are  
 17:15—The waters . . . are . . .  
 17:16—The ten horns . . . shall  
 17:18—The woman . . . is . . .

### The Victory of the Lamb (Rev 17:14-18)

**Rev 17:14 “They will make war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will triumph over them . . . and He will be accompanied by His called and chosen and faithful ones”** (NR) The victorious forces include all those who have been faithful. The prophet Joseph Smith learned who are the called and chosen ones:

There are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . only upon the principles of righteousness. . . . It is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen (D&C 121:35-40).

This definition fits exactly into the message of the vision— aspiring for things of the world is working for the anti-Christ, not the Savior.

**Rev 17:15 “The waters you saw . . . are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages”** (NR) The angel gives an all-encompassing interpretation of the waters as all the inhabitants of the earth. In the OT, waters often represent chaos (Gen 1:2; Ps 18:16; 29:3; 32:6; 77:19; etc.).

**Rev 17:16-17 “The ten horns and the beast that you saw will hate the prostitute. . . .For God has put it into their hearts . . . to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled”** (BSB) The wicked fight the wicked—an interesting paradox. As mentioned previously, power is represented by the horns that grow from this devilish thing, yet the horns shall turn on the whore and help to destroy her. An old proverb says that there is no honor among thieves, meaning that though thieves may be allies for a time, in the end they will steal from each other. In the same way, those who do the work of the devil often turn on each other.

John explains that God allows and even directs this destruction. He will “put it into their heart,” to foster them to become “united in their purpose” to “give their kingdom to the beast” (NR). This way the saints do not need to fight because they will be safe in Zion (D&C 45:68-70; 115:6; 124:36). God directs the boundaries and direction of the destruction. However, God does not cause wickedness. The Book of Mormon teaches that by the wicked, the wicked are punished (Mormon 4:5). Also, Satan will abandon his followers at the last day, but God will open another way for them to repent (Alma 30:60).

**Rev 17:18 “The woman . . . is the great city which holds royal authority over the kings of the earth”** (NR) This refers to the whore, the “mother of harlots,” who sat on the scarlet beast wearing all the riches of the world (cities are always female in Hebrew). She represents many forms of wickedness and ideologies more than a person or place. Whatever she is, avoid her.

## Chapter 18—Two Angels Direct the Destruction of Babylon, after the Saints Leave

**Rev 18:1** “I saw another angel descending from the sky having great authority. And the earth was illuminated by his glory” (NR) A glorious and powerful “celestial messenger” opens the next vision or section. John Taylor described it: “A light bursts forth from the heavens; a celestial messenger is deputed to convey to men tidings of salvation.”<sup>xxii</sup> This angel acts under the authority of God’s priesthood or shared power. God’s power will bless his angelic messengers and all who receive His light. God blesses all His mortal and immortal messengers and servants with the gifts and fruits of His Spirit—faith, hope, charity, visions, healings, miracles, and the like—male and female, young and old (D&C 46:8-30; 88:7-13; Gal 5:22-23; etc.).

**Rev 18:2-3** “He shouted with a loud voice saying . . . ‘Babylon the Great has fallen, and has become the dwelling place of demons . . . the merchants of the earth have grown rich through her excessive luxury’” (NR) The first angel loudly proclaims that Babylon is fallen. It no longer refers just to a city, but all that is the opposite of Zion. Babylon represents all the contamination through worldliness. It is where the unclean live—where millions of people starve while others spend millions of dollars on luxurious excess.

**Rev 18:4-5** “I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, O my people, so that you will not take part in her sins, so that you will not share in her plagues . . . God has remembered her crimes.’” (NR) All are given the opportunity to leave the wickedness of the world (a place of pride, money, insatiable appetites, and corruption), in favor of living God’s laws in the city of Zion. For the time being, we are to build up Zion in our stakes scattered across the world. This call may refer to the final gathering of the righteous geographically. In the last days we will be called to leave the cities of the world before their destruction and form a city of Zion. The same call is referred to in D&C 133:5, 7, 14:

Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord . . . Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon.

**Rev 18:6-7** “Render unto her as she herself has rendered . . . a double portion . . . of suffering and grief. Because she says in her heart, I sit enthroned as a queen” (NR) When God determines that Babylon is ready or ripe for destruction, her punishment will parallel how she lived. In April 1899, Elder Brigham Young, Jr. warned: Hear it Latter-day Saints—you are cultivating the spirit for the whole world. Not for you and your posterity, but for all of the children of men whom God has placed here. You have come out of the world, not to bring Babylon with you. But people have come here from Babylon, and are among the Latter-day Saints with their sins and filth, and we gather it up by the handfuls, sometimes to the extinction of that power that God has placed in every man.<sup>xxiii</sup> It is far worse today. The saints must be careful not to bring Babylon into our lives through our Sabbath practices, media, time, etc.

**Rev 18:8** “In a single day plagues will come upon her—death and sorrow and famine—and she will be consumed by fire, because mighty is the Lord God who judges her” (NR) Babylon that lived in luxury will suddenly receive God’s vengeance. Her collapse will be in “a single day,” or quickly. D&C 64:24 adds, “For after today cometh the burning . . . and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon.”

### Three Lament Babylon’s Fall: Kings, Merchants, and Seafarers (Rev 18:9-19)

**Rev 18:9-10** “The kings of the earth who committed fornication with her and lived with her in luxury will weep and mourn” (NR) Figuratively speaking, we commit fornication when we break covenants, live in sin, or live with pride, greed, opulence. The kings will look at its speedy fall and burning in fear. We will see a similar pattern of destruction that we find in the Book of Mormon, where the wicked work through “secret combinations,” or societies of corruption (Ether 8:14-26). Wickedness never was happiness (Alma 41:10).

**Rev 18:11-16** “The merchants of the earth weep . . . because no one buys their cargo . . . gold and silver . . . pearls, fine linen, purple, silks . . . wine, olive oil, fine flour . . . human lives . . . fruit . . . laid waste” (NR) In opposition to the heavenly city of eternal rewards, the counterfeit Babylon is where one tries to gain wealth through selfish desires (Rev 17:4; and Nephi refers to Babylon as the “the great and abominable church,” 1 Nephi 13:7-8). The problem with seeking for wealth is that it easily erupts beyond the desire to meet one’s needs, to levels of insatiable craving to flaunt itself and to seek for power.

John includes “slaves” in his list of abominable luxuries. One third of the Roman Empire, and one half of its large cities were populated with servants and slaves. Draper and Rhodes observed: “It is of note that with the exception of Rome, Asia Minor—the area in which the seven churches were located—had the heaviest slave trade in the Roman Empire.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Our generation continues to battle with human trafficking and societies that degrade humanity to the level of livestock. John’s use of “fruits” is figurative for the “good things of life.”<sup>xxv</sup> John lists nearly every imaginable luxury from his day. Our list would be longer.

If the Lord's people selfishly seek riches or worldly goods, they break His law. The Lord instructed ancient Israel, "Neither shall [you] greatly multiply to [your]self silver and gold" (Deut 17:17). God commanded Israel to seek Him rather than the riches and carnality of this world, including every wicked practice.

**Rev 18:17-19 Every ship's captain and every sea traveler . . . cried out . . . weeping and mourning . . . for in a single moment she has been laid waste**" (NR) John first describes those who sought wealth by land, and now by sea. Most trade occurred in the ancient world via the seas and rivers. But, in a very short time, God will burn all the great wealth and wickedness of the earth. The ancients of John's day expressed their remorse or mourning by throwing "dust on their heads."

### The Great Rejoicing (Rev 18:20-24)

**Rev 18:20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven and you saints, apostles, and prophets for God has given judgment against her for you"** (NR) In contrast to the mourning of the money makers, the saints on earth and in heaven rejoice at the destruction of Babylon. Unlike the wicked, the righteous can rejoice when God's judgments are manifest. The meaninglessness of materialism will end. Babylon is the great counterfeit of God's plan: "Men mistook lust for joy, sought happiness through possessions, and pursued security through materialism."<sup>xxvi</sup> Babylon is the kingdom of the devil, so it cannot be converted, but her prideful lusts and tempting falsehoods must be destroyed.

This section opens and closes in harmony with Jeremiah's prophetic rejoicing over Babylon's destruction (that occurred under Cyrus the Persian King in 539 B.C.).

#### Jer 51:48

"Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD."

#### Rev 21:20

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her"

#### Jer 51:49

"As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth."

#### Rev 21:21

"Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all

**Rev 18:21 "A mighty angel picked up a stone, like a large millstone and threw it into the sea saying, 'Thus Babylon, the great city, will be violently thrown down, and will no longer be found'"** (NR) The figurative millstone, repenting a half ton or more of weight, not only speaks of the strength of the angel, but also the destructive power and immediacy of God's action against Babylon. The book of Revelation has led up to this point—the fall of Babylon in the last days—at least six times (see Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). The D&C also discusses Babylon's fall (see D&C 1:16; 35:11; 64:24; 86:3; 133:14). OT prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, also include similar denunciations against Babylon (Isa 13:1, and Jer 51). In the Book of Mormon, Nephi's vision was similar, except that Babylon, is referred to as "the great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 14:15-16; 22:14). God promised "the covenant people . . . who were scattered upon all the face of the earth" redemption even if it required heavenly power and fire (1 Nephi 14:14; 22:17).

Before the Savior institutes His millennial reign, He must first cleanse the wickedness, for every knee will bow and every tongue confess, with thankfulness, that Jesus is the Christ (Isaiah 45:23; Mosiah 27:31). He will claim His own and reject those who have opposed Him (Malachi 4:1-3; 2 Th 2:6-10; 1 Nephi 22:23-26; see Jesus Christ: Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

**Rev 18:24 ". . . trumpeters will never be heard . . . lamplight will no longer shine . . . In her the blood of prophets and saints was found and all of those who have been slaughtered on the earth"** (NR) This is the third time John has used the phrase, "blood of saints," as though the martyrs' blood cries to the Lord for vengeance against their murderers (Rev 16:6; 17:6; also see Mormon 8:27; Ether 8:22; and D&C 87:7). It indicates that murders that take someone's life require God's justice. Killing the saints and prophets may also refer to killing spiritual sensitivities. Those who promote ideas that deaden people's sensitivity to truth will also be met by God's justice.

<sup>i</sup> Donald W. Parry and Jay A. Parry, *Understanding the Book of Revelation* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1998), 476.

<sup>ii</sup> Gen 15:16; Ex 34:14; Deut 29:20; Mt 10:34-36; 18:6-7; Jn 2:13-17; Rev 6:16; Alma 16:9-11; Mormon 4:5; 8:21; D&C 1:6-13; 59:21; 76:33; etc.

<sup>iii</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 394.

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- <sup>iv</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 604.
- <sup>v</sup> McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 354.
- <sup>vi</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 612.
- <sup>vii</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xviii.46-49.
- <sup>viii</sup> Strong's #2440, <https://biblehub.com/greek/2440.htm>
- <sup>ix</sup> Strong's #3722, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3722.htm>
- <sup>x</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Armageddon: The scene of the struggle of good and evil is suggested by that battle-field, the plain of Esdraelon, which was famous for two great victories, of Barak over the Canaanites and of Gideon over the Midianites; and for two great disasters, the deaths of Saul and Josiah."
- <sup>xi</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 628.
- <sup>xii</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 434-35.
- <sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 435. Hugh Nibley continued: "By offering 'anything in this world for money' and so making men competitive—competitive in a big way. He would, with the natural wealth of the earth (precious metals, coal, oil, timber, real estate), as exploited by financiers (manipulation of the money market), buy up armies and navies (they cost the most—the military-industrial complex), and leaders of nations and churches (who embody power), and rule the earth with terror (a world at war is Satan's own dominion).
- <sup>xv</sup> Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill, ed., *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context* (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2008), 212–28. Steven Harpers article, "All Things Are the Lord's: The Law of Consecration in the Doctrine and Covenants," is an excellent resource on the subject.
- <sup>xvi</sup> The number of heads and horns are similar to divine numbers but used as a deception—now seven is complete in wickedness.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ogden, 339. The purple is made from a shell fish in Phoenicia. The scarlet dye is made from eggs of an insect (*coccus ilicis*) that live in oak trees in the Holy Land.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 644.
- <sup>xix</sup> Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, "Book of Life." 1.138-139.
- <sup>xx</sup> As discussed in previous classes, from 1831 to 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith received instructions about the "Holy Spirit of Promise" in seven revelations. Six of the seven describe the "Holy Spirit of promise" as a permanent sealing of saving ordinances (D&C 76:53; 88:3-5; 124:124; 131:5, 132:7, 18-19, 26). Joseph also added the phrase in his translation of 1 John 3:9. On February 16, 1832, in a powerful vision of the afterlife, Joseph learned the step-by-step requirements for receiving the Holy Spirit of Promise as recorded in D&C 76:51-56. After this revelation, Joseph became deeply interested with the idea and elaborated on its meaning in at least six sermons (Ehat + Cook, *Words of Joseph*, 4, 15, 190, 209, 284, 335).
- <sup>xxi</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 669. For more on the "Book of Life" see Rev 3:4-5.
- <sup>xxii</sup> John Taylor, *The Government of God*, 95–98. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/44941/44941-h/44941-h.htm> (accessed 12-13-19) The citation continues: "the everlasting gospel is again to be proclaimed to the children of men; The proclamation is to be made to 'every nation, kindred, people, and tongue.' Associated with this, was another declaration, 'Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come.'"
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Brigham Young, Jr., *General Conference*, April, 1899.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 703.
- <sup>xxv</sup> *Ibid.*, 704.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 715.