

The Women of Revelation

It would not be difficult to form a tolerably complete dictionary, of the meaning of the Apocalyptic symbols, by placing over-against each, passages of Scripture in which the same symbol is employed in contexts which indicate its meaning; or in historical narratives, ceremonial observances, or legal enactments, which throw light upon it. To search the Scriptures, is to find the solution of many a difficulty in this book, for it is more closely related to the rest of the Bible than would be supposed by superficial readers.

We proceed, however, briefly to examine two of the leading prophecies of the [Revelation](#), a clear understanding of which is, of itself, sufficient to determine its whole scope and character. They are two of the most important symbolizations in the entire series, they occupy several whole chapters, and are alluded to in others; they are closely related to each other, and one of them is *divinely interpreted*. This is the vision of BABYLON THE GREAT, in the **seventeenth chapter** of the book, a prophecy which, by its synchronical connection with almost all the other predictions of the Apocalypse, furnishes a most valuable clue to the meaning and application of the whole series of visions. This prophecy has besides, a solemn practical importance, rendering it peculiarly needful that it should be rightly interpreted.

Immediately prior to the fall of Babylon, described in the **18th chapter** of Revelation, a voice from heaven cries, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Is it not all-important that Christian people should be very clear as to the system thus solemnly denounced by a voice from heaven? And similarly, immediately after the fall of Babylon, "a great voice, as of much people in heaven," is heard saying, with reference to it, "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."...

The depravity attributed to "Babylon the Great," the peculiarly solemn adjuration to God's people to come out of her, and the utter and awful destruction denounced against her, all combine to attach great practical importance to the inquiry, *what system is intended by this symbol?*

A perusal of the **17th and 18th chapters** of the Book of Revelation shows that "Babylon the Great" represents a system which should last long, exert a subtle and extensive influence, and be guilty of exceeding iniquity and cruelty. This system must *still be in existence*, seeing its destruction takes place simultaneously with "the marriage of the Lamb," an event which we know to be still future; and seeing also that up to the moment of its destruction, or very nearly so, children of God will be found more or less connected with it, so that a need will exist for the urgent call, "*Come out of her, my people.*"

This system is prefigured as a cruelly persecuting one, as one that would "shed the blood of saints and martyrs of Jesus," one on whom the Lord God would "avenge the blood of his servants." The Lord Jesus Christ, who loves his Church, foreseeing the existence and career of this terrible system, forewarned, and thus fore-armed her by this prophecy. He furnishes her with abundant marks whereby the foe may be recognized, and solemnly warns her against making any truce or compromise, while he stimulates and encourages her for the long and bitter conflict by a view of the final result. He would have his people in no perplexity or doubt on so momentous a question, so he has made this prediction peculiarly clear; has placed it in marked and intentional *contrast* with another prophecy, which makes its meaning still clearer; and he has added besides, *an explanation* which leaves no room for the candid student to err.

Let the reader note the contrasted features of the two symbolic prefigurations:

"The Whore That Sitteth Upon Many Waters."

"Babylon The Great."

"There came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of THE GREAT WHORE that sitteth upon many waters.

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, BABYLON THE GREAT, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" ([Rev. 17:1-6](#)).

"The Bride, The Lamb's Wife."

"The Holy Jerusalem."

"There came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee THE BRIDE, the Lamb's wife.

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me" (the bride, the Lamb's wife, under another symbol) ([Rev. 21](#)).

"To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is

the righteousness of saints" ([Rev. 19:8](#)).

This Bride is described as "THE HOLY JERUSALEM descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious" ([Revelation 21](#)).

The dragon "persecuted the woman," and "the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" ([Rev. 12:13-17](#)).

As to Babylon John adds, "when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? *I will tell thee the mystery of the woman.* ...The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. The waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues....And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" ([Rev. 17:7](#)).

These prophecies present two broadly contrasted *women*, identified with two broadly contrasted *cities*, one reality being in each case, doubly represented as *a woman*, and as *a city*. The harlot and Babylon are one; the Bride and the heavenly Jerusalem are one.

It is evident that the true interpretation of either of these double prefigurations must afford a clue to the true interpretation of the other.

The two women are contrasted in every particular that is mentioned about them; the one is as pure as purity itself, "made ready" and fit for heaven's unsullied holiness; the other, foul as corruption could make her, fit only for the fires of destruction.

The one belongs to the Lamb, who loves her as the bridegroom loves the bride; the other is associated with a wild beast, and with the kings of the earth, who ultimately hate and destroy her.

The one is clothed with fine linen-- righteousness; the other is attired in scarlet and gold, in jewels and pearls, gorgeous indeed, but with earthly splendor only.

The one is represented as a chaste virgin, espoused to Christ; the other is mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

The one is persecuted, pressed hard by the dragon, driven into the wilderness, and well-nigh overwhelmed; the other is drunken with martyr blood, *seated on* a beast which has received its power from the persecuting dragon.

The one sojourns in solitude in the wilderness, the other "reigns in the wilderness" over peoples, and nations, and kindreds, and tongues.

The one goes in with the Lamb to the marriage supper, amid the glad hallelujahs of heaven; the

other is stripped, insulted, torn, and destroyed, by her guilty paramours.

We lose sight of the Bride amid the effulgence of heavenly glory and joy, and of the harlot amid the gloom and darkness of the smoke that "rose up for ever and ever."

It is impossible to find in Scripture a contrast more marked; and the conclusion is irresistible, that whatever one may represent, the other must prefigure *its opposite*. They are not disconnected visions, but a pair--a pair associated, not by likeness, but by contrast.

Now, Scripture leaves us in no doubt as to the signification of the emblematic bride, the Lamb's wife, the heavenly Jerusalem. We read, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The purpose of Christ's love, as regards his blood-bought church is, that she should be with him, and be one with him forever; that she should behold and share his glory, being perfectly conformed to his image. Here, in prophetic vision, we see this blessed design accomplished, and the complete and perfectly sanctified church, clad in spotless robes of righteousness, brought to the marriage supper of the Lamb. We see her persecuted like her Lord, and like her Lord and with her Lord, glorified. Beyond all question, the New Jerusalem bride represents *the true church of Christ*.

What then must the contrasted symbol, the Babylonian harlot, represent? *Surely some false and apostate church*, some church which, while professing to belong to Christ, is in reality given up to fellowship with the world, and linked in closest union with the kings of the earth; a worldly church, which has left her first love, forgotten her heavenly calling, sunk into carnality and sin, and proved shamelessly and glaringly faithless to her Lord.

Be it observed, that these symbols, a woman and a city, prefigure definite systems, corporate bodies, not merely a multitude of similar but disconnected individuals. The tares of a wheat-field, the bad fish in the net, may represent such; but here we have neither true Christians nor worldly professors, as *individuals*, but two corporations, two definite bodies. The true church of Christ is a body; its members are united in the closest union to their Head and to each other; one life animates them: "Because I live, ye shall live also;" one spirit dwells in them; they are one habitation of God. The link that unites them is, however, a *spiritual* one; the body is consequently visible *as such*. A false church can have no such spiritual link. The bond that unites *it* must therefore be carnal, outward, visible; the church represented by Babylon must be a *visible church*, an earthly corporation, and as such capable of being discerned and recognized.... The woman and the city are one--if we can discover the name of the city, we shall be able to identify the church intended.

The last words of the angel to John seem to leave no possibility of mistake as to the city. "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth....And the woman which thou

sawest is *that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*" What city was that? There was but *one* great city which, in John's day, *reigned over the kings of the earth.* It was ROME: and Rome is the *only* city that *was* great then, *has been* great--in one way or other ever since, and *is* so still. And Rome was seated on seven hills--"the seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." Her common name with the classic writers of St. John's age, is "the seven hilled city;" an annual festival used to be held in honor of the "seven hilled city;" every Latin poet of note, during a period of five hundred years, alludes to Rome's seven hills. The medals and coins of the day *represent Rome* as a woman sitting on seven hills; and her titles show, with sufficient clearness, how thoroughly she *reigned.* She was styled "the royal Rome;" "the mistress of the world;" "the queen of nations." Her sway was all but universal. She was the metropolis of that fourth great empire which Daniel had foretold would break in pieces and subdue all things, "dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly;" and, at the time of the Apocalyptic visions, her power was at its height. Rome, and no other city, can be intended here; the woman is in some way identified with *Rome.* We previously saw that she must represent a church; now we know what church. The harlot is the *Church of Rome;* for simple minds there seems no escape from this conclusion. "The woman which thou sawest is that great *city*" "which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The question, however, naturally suggests itself, If the woman be identified in some way with ROME, why is her brow emblazoned with the name of BABYLON? The answer is evident; the Apocalypse is a book of mysteries; things are represented by signs; realities are veiled; and it would have been altogether inconsistent with the whole style of this prophecy to have written ROME on the harlot's brow. The woman is a figure of the church, a corrupt, idolatrous church; that is, the *symbol* seen by John was suggestive of something widely different from itself; so the name with which the symbol was stamped, was also suggestive of something widely different from itself, though mysteriously similar. The harlot is "Mystery, Babylon the Great."

Names were formerly given as expressions of character or work; as, for instance, Mary was commanded to call her child's name Jesus, which means deliverer or saviour, because he should *save his people* from their sins. The name Babylon, applied by the Spirit to the Church of Rome, expresses her character for Babylon means mixture-- confusion (see [Lev. 18:23](#)). This union of the woman (church) with the beast (empire) constitutes the spiritual harlotry of which she is guilty.

But the same (Babylon) applies to her entire family; her daughters inherit both her nature and name, for she is a "*mother* of harlots," and her works they do. Some of her daughters have followed very closely in her footsteps, in mixing Church and State. Such are "The Church of England" and other State Churches. And such would other daughters be, also, if they could find empires willing to support them.

The same spirit of *confusion*--the Church walking in unlawful union with the world--is seen on every hand. The Church (nominal) and the world walk hand in hand, unite their interests, and make merry together. It is the worldly element and its wealth that is sought by every sect to

support and sustain the Church in the degree of luxury she wishes to enjoy. Which is why it should be no surprise to us today, as we see Protestant churches compromising on God's morals and condoning homosexuality and the such, not only among the ones who sit in the pews, but amongst the very highest in office, those responsible for the spiritual lives of the ones sitting in the pews, the ones who feed the flock. Alas, the name Babylon is emblazoned on the brow of *every sectarian system* the world over! Yet they all, like the mother system, hold forth "a golden cup (the Word of God) full of abomination *for* (Greek, *kai*.) the filthiness of their fornication," without a blush for their shame, and, in fact, ignorant of the fact that it condemns them.

But the cup of Divine indignation is now full. The Lord will have pity and patience no longer, and though, until this harvest time, he permitted wheat and tares to grow together, the imperative command now is, "Come out of her, *my people*." The magnet of truth is gathering out the Jewels, and the reproaches of the world and the nominal Church are refining and fitting them for the Master's use.

He is thus seeking out the "little flock"--the true Church--whose names are written in heaven, who, during his absence, have waited for him, searched carefully every letter of his, which would inform them of his coming and glory, and of his will concerning them; those who have made and performed the sacrifice of earthly interests, to secure with him the higher and more enduring pleasures and honors than any which the world can offer. Yes, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels" ([Mal. 3:16,17](#)).

Cyrus, who conquered the typical Babylon, and set free the typical Israel in bondage in her, is undoubtedly a type of Christ. In the overthrow of the type, not only was the capitol city (Babylon) overthrown, but the empire with all its provinces and cities. So, too, Babylon here is to fall, and it implies not merely the *great* city--the capitol and leading system of the apostate Church (the Roman Church)--but *all* under the rule of the world--all of the mixture, all of the confusion-- mother and daughters.

It is Babylon that falls and is dashed in pieces in this day of the Lord, but the true and faithful virgin shall be gathered and made perfect, and, as the Bride and joint-heir, shall share Christ's glory.

"Dear is this Church to God,
Her walls before him stand;
Dear as the apple of his eye,
And graven on his hand."

Henry Grattan Guinness R471
