

**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Day 360 – December 26<sup>th</sup> – Revelation 17:1-18**

**Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation**

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

**17:1-19:10 – A tale of two cities, two women**

This section contrasts two cities, Babylon and the New Jerusalem. They are personified and contrasted as two women, a great whore and a bride.

Witherington comments, “Rev 17 should not be seen as the sequel to Rev 16. It is an expansion or close-up of the seventh cup or perhaps the sixth and seventh cups. The procedure of recounting a vision and then following it with an interpretation is common in apocalyptic literature, not least because such highly symbolic visions required interpretation, even to those who received them... Rev 17:1-19:10 demonstrates how Babylon is made to drain the cup of God’s wrath. The lamentation in Rev 18 and the worship in Rev 19:1-10 underscore that the fall is final. A good deal of the description of Babylon draws on Jer. 51.” Witherington includes an interesting excursus on the connection between a city and religion in the ancient world: cities were often believed to be the earthly seat of a god. Witherington concludes, “These things need to be kept in view as we evaluate what John says about both Babylon/Rome and the New Jerusalem. He understood quite well that such cities were profoundly religious in character, in design, in practice, and in belief structure. John does not oppose a secular to a sacred city in his visions. He opposes two categorically opposed visions of a holy city, one involving the deification of the human in the person of the Emperor and of the city, and of nature/creation in the form of a multitude of other gods and goddesses, and the other involving the deity of an only God who always maintains the creator/creature distinction and so makes relationships between the human and divine eternally possible.”

**Verse 1**

Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἐπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἔχόντων τὰς ἐπτὰ φιάλας, καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων· Δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης τῆς καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν,

ἐπτα seven

δευρο adv. come, come here

Cf. 21:9.

δεῖξω Verb, fut act indic, 3 s δεικνυμι

show, reveal

κριμα, τος n judgement

πορνη, ης f prostitute

Cf. Nahum 3:4; Isa 23:16,17.

καθημαι sit, sit down, live

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water

Cf. v.15 and Jer 51:13. The picture from Jer. 51 of the various canals of the Euphrates which distributed water throughout the area around Babylon is now applied to Rome and its many peoples – “the influence of Rome flows throughout the entire world.” Mounce.

**Verse 2**

μεθ’ ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.

πορνευω commit sexual immorality

βασιλευς, εως m king

“They represent the apostate nations which Rome has enticed into idolatrous worship of herself and the beast.” Mounce.

Witherington comments that “M. E. Boring has rightly noted that fornication here refers not only to idolatrous worship of the Emperor but likely also worship of the city of Rome in the form of the goddess Roma. This in effect involves ‘accepting Rome as the point of orientation for life in this world, that is, making Rome herself a god.’”

μεθυω be drunk, drink freely

κατοικεω live, inhabit

οἶνος, ου m wine

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality

### Verse 3

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι. καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθήμενη ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον, γέμοντα ὀνόματα βλασφημίας, ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα.

ἀπήνεγκέν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀπαγω

lead away, lead, bring

ἐρημος, ου f deserted place

"In this context the wilderness is not a place of divine protection and nourishment (as in 12:6, 14), but an appropriate setting for a vision of judgement." Mounce.

γυνή, αικος f woman, wife

θηριον, ου n animal, beast

κοκκινος, η, ου scarlet, red

Witherington comments, "The colour of the Beast is probably intended to recall the colour of the dragon in 12:3. But Beasley-Murray may be correct that the colour is meant to suggest royalty. Scarlet and purple were colours much beloved by the wealthy and royalty of Rome. But it is also true that all purple outfits were worn by high-class prostitutes."

γεμω be full, be covered with

ὄνομα, τος n name, title

βλασφημία, ας f slander, blasphemy

"The reference is to the blasphemous claims to deity made by the Roman emperors who employed such titles as *theios* (divine), *soter* (saviour), and *kyrios* (Lord). The blasphemies are not so much directly spoken against God by the beast as they are implied by his self-deification. The beast (like the dragon of chap. 12) has seven heads and ten horns (cf. 13:1). John supplies his own interpretation to these later in the chapter (vss. 9-14, 16-17)." Mounce.

κεφαλή, ης f head

ἑπτα seven

κερας, ατος n horn

δεκα ten

### Verse 4

καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἣν περιβεβλημένη πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον, καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίταις, ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς,

περιβεβλημένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s

περιβαλλω put on, clothe, dress

πορφυρους, α, ουν purple; purple garment

Signifying the luxury and splendour of ancient Rome. See also Witherington's comments in the previous verse.

κεχρυσωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s

χρυσωω cover or adorn with gold

χρυσιον, ου n gold

λιθος, ου m stone

τιμιος, α, ου precious, valuable

μαργαριτης, ου m pearl

ποτηριον, ου n cup

χειρ, χειρος f hand

γεμω be full, be covered with

βδελυγμα, τος n something detestable

The και is probably exegetical, meaning 'even'.

ἀκαθαρτος, ου unclean

πορνεία, ας f see v.2

Cf. Jer 51:7 and Dan 9:27. "In view of Mark 13 and other texts, the reference to the abominations should probably be taken to mean idolatrous practices, since abomination was a common Jewish euphemism for 'idol'." Witherington.

### Verse 5

καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, μυστήριον, Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.

μετωπον, ου n forehead

γεγραμμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s γραφω write

"John was probably also drawing on the practice of Roman harlots of wearing a headband with their name on it." Witherington.

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery

Opinions differ as to whether μυστηριον forms part of the name. The NEB thinks not and translates it "written on her forehead was a name with a secret meaning..."

πορνή, ης f see v.1

βδελυγμα, τος n see v.4

She is the "mother of whores and of every obscenity on earth." NEB.

### Verse 6

καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ.

Καὶ ἐθαύμασα ἰδὼν αὐτὴν θαῦμα μέγα·

μεθυω be drunk

αἷμα, ατος f blood

μαρτυς, μαρτυρος dat pl μαρτυσιν m

witness, martyr

Probably not meant to imply two different groups but a double reference to believers who had given their lives as a result of their faithfulness to the gospel. Witherington, however, comments, "We have here two phrases following the preposition of ἐκ, which most naturally suggests two different groups. Before we have had the tandem of the prophets and martyrs/witnesses. The reference actually could be to the OT saints and the Christians (cf. Heb 12:1ff.)."

θαυμάζω wonder, be amazed

ἰδων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ὄραω see  
θαύμα, τοσ n wonder

"The revolting and gory spectacle causes John to wonder 'with a great wonder.' Upon being taken to the wilderness he had expected to see the judgement of the harlot, but up to this point she appears triumphant. Ostentatiously attired and adorned in wealth, she sits upon the scarlet beast advertising her base trade and intoxicated with the blood of her victims. The true nature of the empire is at last fully revealed."

Mounce.

### Verse 7

καὶ εἶπεν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος· Διὰ τί ἐθαύμασας· ἐγὼ ἐρῶ σοι τὸ μυστήριον τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ τοῦ θηρίου τοῦ βαστάζοντος αὐτήν, τοῦ ἔχοντος τὰς ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰς καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα·

ἐρῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s λεγῶ

μυστήριον, ου n see v.5

βαστάζω carry, bear

ἔχοντος Verb, pres act ptc, m gen s ἔχω

ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰς... see v.3.

### Verse 8

τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδες ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει· καὶ θαυμασθήσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὧν οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, βλέπόντων τὸ θηρίον ὅτι ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται.

εἶδες Verb, 2nd aor act indic, 2 s ὄραω see

ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν An obvious parody of the Lamb (cf. 1:18; 2:8). The description is an intentional antithesis to the One "who is and was and is to come" (1:4,8; 4:8).

μέλλω (before an infin) be going, be about

ἀναβαίνω come up, ascend

ἀβύσσος, ου f abyss, underworld

ἀπώλεια, ας f destruction, utter ruin

"In the broadest sense the beast is that satanically inspired power that, although having received the stroke of death, returns to hurl himself with renewed fury against the forces of God. It is this incredible power of resuscitation that causes those who dwell upon the earth to stand in awe. He is the beast of chapter 13 who had received a death-stroke and yet survived (12:3, 12, 14). Down through history he repeatedly 'comes up from the abyss' to harass and, if it were possible, to destroy the people of God.... The beast *was*; at the moment he *is not*. John wrote under the shadow of an impending persecution. The beast is about to come again. This coming will be his last, for now the King of kings and Lord of lords will cast him (along with the false prophet) alive into the lake of fire. This is what it means that he goes into perdition (see vs, 11 as well)." Mounce.

θαυμασθήσονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl θαυμάζω

κατοικεῶ live, inhabit

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφῶ  
write

βιβλίον, ου n book, scroll

ζωῆ, ης f life

καταβολῆ, ης f beginning, creation

κόσμος, ου m world, universe

Cf. Ps 69:28; Is 4:3; Rev 3:5.

βλεπῶ see

παρεῖμι be present

"The verb used to describe the coming of the beast is closely related to the noun which regularly describes the parousia or second coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 1 Jn 2:28; etc.)." Mounce.

Witherington comments, "Caird points out that at 11:7 we hear of a beast that rises from the abyss. Rev 13:1ff. must be compared at this juncture. There the monster in question was the Roman Empire, and it seems likely that this is true here as well. But the idea of the second coming refers to the epitome of evil (i.e., Nero back from the dead). The figure apparently does not exist while the author is writing but is expected again, having lived once in the past. Did John really believe Nero would return? Probably not, but he is drawing on common notions to convey the idea of an anti-Christ figure. Evil takes many shapes, though ultimately it all goes back to the same source – the abyss and the Devil."

**Verse 9**

Ἦδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν. αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαι  
ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσίν, ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ'  
αὐτῶν. καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν·

ὦδε adv here

νοῦς, νοος, νοί, νουν m mind,  
understanding

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight

'Here is needed the understanding which is wisdom'. "John is saying that although the interpretation of the seven heads is not obvious, it may be understood by those who ponder the riddle with care and wisdom." Mounce.

ὄρος, οὺς n mountain, hill

An obvious reference to Rome, built on seven hills.

ὅπου adv. where

καθημαί sit, live

βασιλευς, εως m king

The seven kings would appear to be symbolic of the universal power of Rome and beyond that the comprehensive reign of the beast.

**Verse 10**

οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω  
ἦλθεν, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μέναι,  
πεντε (indeclinable) five  
ἔπεσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl πιπῶ fall  
εἷς, μια, ἓν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one  
ἄλλος, η, ο another, other  
οὐπω not yet

Attempts to identify the five and the other two as particular Roman emperors are fraught with difficulty. Others seek to identify each with historic world empires, Rome being the sixth and the seventh the 'Christian' empire established by Constantine. It is perhaps best to see the number as purely symbolic. "John is not interested in a careful tabulation of the past but is declaring the nearness of the end by the commonly accepted use of a numerical scheme. For John seven is the number of completeness. Five kings have fallen, one is, and the last remains only for a short time." Mounce.

ὅταν when

ὀλίγον adv. a little, only a little

δεῖ impersonal verb it is necessary, must

μέναι Verb, aor act infin μενω trans  
remain, stay

**Verse 11**

καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν. καὶ αὐτὸς  
ὄγδοός ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν, καὶ εἰς  
ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει.

ὄγδοος, η, ον eighth

ἑπτὰ seven

Mounce suggests that the eighth who is part of the seven is the Antichrist. Witherington argues that it is Domitian.

ἀπώλεια, ας f see v.8

**Verse 12**

καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα ἃ εἶδες δέκα βασιλεῖς  
εἰσιν, οἵτινες βασιλείαν οὐπω ἔλαβον, ἀλλὰ  
ἐξουσίαν ὡς βασιλεῖς μίαν ὥραν λαμβάνουσιν  
μετὰ τοῦ θηρίου.

βασιλευς, εως m king

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὁ τι  
who, which

Mounce says that βασιλεία is here used to mean 'royal power', cf. Lk 19:12.

οὐπω not yet

ἐξουσία, ας f authority, power

ώρα, ας f hour, moment

Many identify the ten kings with the Parthian satraps who were viewed as a threat to Rome. Witherington writes, "We may be talking about provincial governors or local officials who ran the imperial cult in Asia." He quotes Friesen who writes, "The book of Revelation must be understood in its local setting as part of a clash of religious ideologies, for it represents an assault on fundamental issues of social organisation in later first-century Asia." Beckwith, however, says that they are "purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on earth which are to be made subservient to Antichrist."

**Verse 13**

οὗτοι μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν  
καὶ ἐξουσίαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ διδώσιν.

γνώμη, ης f purpose, intent

δύναμις, εως f power

διδόσιν Verb, pres act indic, 3 pl δίδωμι

They are "willing collaborators" (Morris) who share in Antichrist's hostility to Christ and his followers.

**Verse 14**

οὗτοι μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου πολεμήσουσιν, καὶ τὸ  
ἀρνίον νικήσει αὐτούς, ὅτι κύριος κυρίων  
ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, καὶ οἱ μετ'  
αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί.

ἀρνίον, ου n lamb

πολεμῶ wage war, fight

νικῶ conquer, overcome

Cf. Ps 136:2,3; Dan 2:47; 4:37 LXX.

κλητος, η, ον called

ἐκλεκτος, η, ον chosen

πιστος, η, ον faithful

Cf. Rev 2:26,27.

### Verse 15

Καὶ λέγει μοι· Τὰ ὕδατα ἃ εἶδες, οὗ ἡ πόρνη κάθεται, λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι εἰσὶν καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι.

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n see v.1

οὗ adv where

πόρνη, ης f see v.1

καθημαί see v.1

"The harlot sits on them, which suggests heavy-handed ruling or squashing of local autonomy." Witherinton.

λαος, ου m people, a people

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

ἔθνη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people

γλῶσσαι, ης f tongue, language

The fourfold grouping stresses universality.

### Verse 16

καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα ἃ εἶδες καὶ τὸ θηρίον, οὗτοι μισήσουσι τὴν πόρνην, καὶ ἡρημωμένην ποιήσουσιν αὐτήν καὶ γυμνήν, καὶ τὰς σάρκας αὐτῆς φάγονται, καὶ αὐτήν κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρί·

The fate of the harlot is described in phrases reminiscent of Ezekiel's allegory of Oholibab (Ezek 23:11-35).

κερας, ατος n see v.3.

θηριον, ου n see v.3.

μισεω hate, despise

ἡρημωμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s

ἐρημοομαι be made waste or desolate

γυμνος, η, ον naked

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh

φάγονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl

ἐσθιω eat, consume

Cf. 2 Kings 9:30-37.

κατακαύσουσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl

κατακαιω burn

πυρ, ος n fire

Cf. Lev 21:9.

"This turning of the beast upon the woman who sits upon him speaks of 'a terrible and mysterious law of political history, according to which every revolutionary power contains within itself the seed of self-destruction' (Lilje...). It describes the self-destroying power of evil. Morris notes that the wicked are not a happy band of brothers, but precisely because they are wicked they give way to jealousy and hatred, so that 'at the climax their mutual hatreds will result in mutual destruction'." Mounce.

Witherinton asks, "Do the ten horns represent the Parthian straps invading Rome and led by the returned Nero? This certainly makes sense of what follows in Rev 19:16-18."

### Verse 17

ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ, καὶ ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην καὶ δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ, ἄχρι τελεσθήσονται οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ.

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδωμι

καρδια, ας f heart

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω

γνωμη, ης f purpose, intent

ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην They were of 'one mind.'

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin διδωμι

ἄχρι prep and conj until

τελεσθήσονται Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl

τελεω complete, finish, fulfill

"This verse denies the existence of any ultimate dualism in the world. In the final analysis the powers of evil serve the purpose of God. The coalition between the beast and his allies will continue until the words of God – the prophecies leading up to the overthrow of Antichrist – are fulfilled." Mounce.

### Verse 18

καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἣν εἶδες ἔστιν ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη ἣ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς.

πολις, εως f city, town

βασιλευς, εως m king

Again, βασιλεια is used in the sense of 'royal power' (cf. v.12).

"For John, the city is Rome. She is the wicked seducer whose pernicious influence has permeated the whole of the Mediterranean world. Yet Babylon the Great, source of universal harlotry and abomination (vs. 5), is more than first century Rome. Every great centre of power which has prostituted its wealth and influence restores to life the spirit of ancient Babylon." Mounce.