

John's Heavenly Visions: Revelation 4:1—22:5

“I will show you what must take place after these things” (4:1)

Preceded by vision of Christ among 7 churches (1-3); followed by conclusion about “words of the prophesy of this book” (22:6-21).

Introduction (4:1-11) – God on a throne, surrounded by 24 elders and 4 living creatures. *Worship Scene (4:8-11): “Worthy are You... our God... for You created all things.” [4LC + 24E]*

Visions of Scroll with 7 Seals (5:1—22:5)

Introduction (5:1-14) – *Worship Scene (5:8-14): A “new song”: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.” [4LC/24E + many angels]*

1st Seal (6:1-2) – Conquering king on a white horse

2nd Seal (6:3-4) – War on a red horse

3rd Seal (6:5-6) – Famine on a black horse

4th Seal (6:7-8) – Death on a pale horse

5th Seal (6:9-11) – Martyrs under the altar: “How long... will you refrain from judging and avenging?”

6th Seal (6:12—7:17) – Day of the wrath of the Lamb: Sealing of the 144,000; promise of final reward for the righteous; *Worship Scene (7:9-12): “Salvation to our God... and to the Lamb” [multitude of saints + angels/24E/4LC]*

7th Seal (8:1-22:5) – Silence, followed by seven angels with **7 Trumpets...**

↳ Visions of the 7 Trumpets (8:1—22:5)

Introduction (8:1-6) – Silence; prayers of the saints go up before God

1st Trumpet (8:7) – Third of earth burned up

2nd Trumpet (8:8-9) – Third of sea became blood

3rd Trumpet (8:10-11) – Third of rivers and springs became bitter

4th Trumpet (8:12-13) – Third of sun/moon/stars darkened

5th Trumpet (9:1-12) – 1st Woe: Locusts, from the bottomless pit, torment the unsealed

6th Trumpet (9:13—11:14) – 2nd Woe: Army from east kills a third of mankind; John recommissioned to continue prophesying; protection and reward for the righteous (measuring of the temple, deliverance for the two witnesses).

7th Trumpet (11:15—22:5) – 3rd Woe: Christ begins to reign—final judgment/reward for humanity.

– Loud voices in *Worship Scene (11:15-18): “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of... Christ” [Loud voices + 24E]*, followed by three signs:

1. (12:1) Woman with the child who will rule the nations (Christ).
2. (12:3) Dragon and 2 beasts who rule the nations until they suffer God's wrath.
Worship Scene (14:1-5): A “new song” [only 144,000]
3. (15:1) Seven angels with the **7 Bowls of God's Wrath...**

↳ Visions of the 7 Bowls of God's Wrath (15:1-22:5)

Introduction (15:1-8) – *Worship Scene (15:2-4): The song of Moses and the Lamb [those victorious over the beast]*

1st Bowl (16:1-2) – Those with mark of the beast given sores

2nd Bowl (16:3) – Everything in the sea died

3rd Bowl (16:4-7) – Every river and spring became blood; *Worship Scene (16:5-7): “Righteous are you... because You judged.... They deserve it.” [angel of the waters + altar]*

4th Bowl (16:8-9) – Sun scorches mankind

5th Bowl (16:10-11) – Kingdom of beast was darkened

6th Bowl (16:12-16) – Euphrates river dried up so eastern kings can gather at Armageddon for the war of the great day of God

7th Bowl (16:17—22:5) – Babylon (the harlot) defeated and given the wrath of God; *Worship Scene (19:1-7): “Hallelujah!... God... has judged the great harlot... the Almighty reigns.” [great multitude + great multitude + 24E/4LC; great multitude]; final judgment; Jerusalem (the bride) married to the Lamb and given the glory of God.*

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Class Activities:

Prayer

Introduction:

- Ħ Rev. 19 – destruction of a harlot, introduction of a bride, picture of Christ as conqueror
- Ħ Give outline of book, explain telescoping – we are in final judgment/reward section
- Ħ Read prior worship scenes – what reason is given for worship in each scene?
- Ħ Read text (entire chapter?)

Exposition:

- Ħ This is the final worship scene in the book. What is the reason for worship? Is this similar to any prior?
 - Ħ identity of harlot? - list verses with clues for a small group handout
 - Ħ identity of bride? - list verses describing her, showing she is also a city
 - Ħ contrast final state of harlot with final state of bride

Application:

- Ħ Our desire for revenge? Is celebrating God's judgment of evil people a reason for worship?
 - Ħ invite verses, list verses for large group reading/reflection: 6:10; 18:20; Romans 12:19 (quotes Deut 32:35—cf. Revelation 19:2 quoting Deut 32:43: “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will *avenge the blood of His servants.*”); Luke 1:46, 51-53; 2 Thess 1:6-10; various Psalms (140), etc.
 - Ħ read Miroslav Volf: “the practice of nonviolence requires a belief in divine vengeance” (Johnson, 271)
 - Ħ consider how bride would feel about harlot claiming residence in her groom's kingdom!

- Ħ How do we prepare ourselves as Christ's bride? How do we put on clothes of righteousness?
 - Ħ Invite verses depicting our part, God's part
 - Ħ emphasize role of Holy Spirit in bearing good fruit, our role in walking in the Spirit
 - Ħ emphasize God's graciousness: He teaches us his standards of righteousness, loves us while sinners, removes our sin through Jesus' death, places his holy law in our hearts, gives us Holy Spirit with its good desires and the power to live out those good desires, and then—after he's done almost all the work!—rewards us for being righteous! (Like a mother who helps a child bake cookies for first time: she does most of work, cookies turn out a little funny thanks to child's part, then praises child profusely at end for being an amazing baker.)

The Harlot

14:8 – First mention of “Babylon” and her “wine of _____.”

11:8 – What city is called “great” earlier in the book? _____

16:17-19 – Babylon is given the “wine of _____.” (What fell along with her? Does this suggest anything about when this is happening? Note also “It is done” in vs. 17.)

17:1-6 – Several cities in the Old Testament were condemned for harlotry with the nations, including: _____ (Ezekiel 16:1-2, 8, 15, 26, 28-29, etc.), and _____ (Isaiah 23:17-18).

19:2 – What two kinds of sins characterize the harlot?

18:3-7 – What sins of the harlot are described in these verses?

18:20, 24 – What city in the New Testament was condemned for killing prophets and saints? _____ (See Matthew 23:34-37; Luke 13:33 and Acts 7:51-52.)

17:9-10 – The harlot is sitting on a beast with seven heads, which represent seven _____ and seven _____. What ancient city was known as “the city of seven hills”? _____ Does this suggest 1) that the harlot *equals* this ancient city, or 2) that the *beast* equals this ancient city, and that the harlot *depends on* it (“We have no king but Caesar,” John 19:12-15) or perhaps *rules over* it?

17:15 – The harlot is sitting on “many waters,” which represent _____. What does this suggest about the harlot's identity?

17:18 – What literal city reigned over the kings of the earth when John saw these visions? _____

17:16 – The seven-headed beast (perhaps _____?) eventually destroys the harlot!

So who is the harlot?? (Partial answer: 11:15)

The Bride

19:7-9 – Who is the focus of attention at the bride's wedding? Who prepares the bride for the wedding? See 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; and 22:14. (Also Isaiah 61:10; Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 2:10.)

21:1-2 and 9-11 – The Lamb's bride is also called _____.

The Harlot versus the Bride

Compare 17:1 (which begins the detailed description of the harlot) with 21:9 (which begins the detailed description of the bride).

Compare 19:9-10 (after the detailed description of the harlot) with 22:6-9 (after the detailed description of the bride).

Compare 18:23 (final state of harlot) with 21:23 and 22:5 (final state of bride).