

The Identification of Babylon the Harlot in the Book Of Revelation

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by
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Editor's note: The following seven documents (title-table of contents, five chapters, and bibliography) constitute Ragan Ewing's Master's Thesis done at Dallas Theological Seminary in 2002. He argues in "The Identification of Babylon the Harlot in the Book of Revelation" that the harlot is Jerusalem. A part of this argument is also that Revelation was written pre-70. Although Ragan did not convince either of his readers (Dr. Harold W. Hoehner and Daniel B. Wallace), he did make out, I believe, as good a case as can be made for the view espoused. And it is well written. Although I am not yet convinced of his interpretation, I may well be wrong. And he has certainly gotten me to rethink this issue.

Daniel B. Wallace
Münster, Germany
March 27, 2003

CHAPTER 4:

THE EVIDENCE FOR JERUSALEM AS THE HARLOT

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/st-essay/ragan/toc.htm> for the rest of this thesis.

The case for identifying Jerusalem as the intended referent for the harlot image in Revelation proceeds on several fronts. Some are related to internal evidence throughout the Apocalypse, others involve the background of the rest of Scripture and general thematic emphases of biblical prophecy. But when taken together, I am persuaded that these lines of argument point in one primary direction, as we will see in the following evaluation of the evidence.

Common Objections

The first step in examining the Jerusalem case, if we are to have a fair hearing of the evidence, is to consider the main objections that are offered by opponents to the this view. Of course, the most common is the contention that the Apocalypse was written after A.D. 70 and could therefore not be concerned with a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. This objection has been thoroughly analyzed in chapter three above, and the arguments related to such need not be repeated here. There are however a few others that warrant deliberation.

Babylon Imagery in Jewish Sources

One of the chief reasons many have contended that Babylon represents Rome in the Apocalypse is the widely recognized fact that a number of Jewish sources use this device to critique Rome.¹ Certainly this is not uncommon, and it is understandable that many commentators find this compelling. Moreover, this argument presupposes the understanding that these Jewish writers used such imagery in light of the destruction of the temple, an act first executed by historical Babylon, and later recapitulated by the Romans.² Of course, tied to this approach is the assumption that the book was written after the second destruction, which is also when all of the aforementioned Jewish instances of this representation for Rome occur.³

Beale takes the argument a step further, noting that there is no example in Jewish literature of the use of the name Babylon for Jerusalem.⁴ But this particular silence argument seems weak. It is to be expected that the Jews would not apply the name "Babylon" to themselves. Who would?⁵ It is, in fact, the very unexpected dramatic irony of such imagery that makes John's use of the label from a Christian perspective so striking and meaningful if Jerusalem is in view.

Beale also points out that Sodom has precedent for being used as a metaphor for Israel,⁶ but not Babylon.⁷ But this argument, too, carries little weight. Most of the prophets were written before Babylon had fallen (many before she existed!), the few exceptions being written shortly thereafter.⁸ Therefore, she naturally would not be used as an ancient fallen enemy of God, the way Sodom or Egypt would. This would have carried about as much thrust of clarity and style as calling Jerusalem "Rome" in the Apocalypse while Rome was still standing. It would have been confusing, and would not follow the precedent of previous prophets.

On the other hand, now that Babylon's horrific rule had become a distant memory, application of her name to apostate Jerusalem, like the names of Sodom and Egypt, which of course have been used for Jerusalem in this very book,⁹ would be absolutely appropriate. It would mean Christians were living in exile in the center of heathenism (not even Rome, but God's adulterous wife!), but they would soon be rescued and vindicated as she was judged by God, just as had happened with Sodom and Egypt before.

There is a further point to be made here regarding the purpose of the Babylon metaphor. As has been said, most scholars understand the connotations of the image to relate to the destroyer of the temple, which would of course not fit Jerusalem. However, Wilson has argued that, while these connotations with Babylon became the major thrust post-70, the focus in earlier writings was on Babylon as the place of exile, the pagan place where God's people sojourned.¹⁰ In this vein, Revelation does not at any point connect Babylon to the temple's destroyer. The image is only employed in terms of a pagan city that persecutes the saints, out of which God's true people are to flee. Wilson, in fact, considers this usage more consistent with other pre-70 sources, and thus considers it to be suggestive of an early date for the book.

Whether or not these ideas may be decisively established, it does seem fair to say in light of these issues that the Jewish usage of the name Babylon for Rome, while perhaps worth considering as a useful piece of evidence in favor of the Rome view, does not preclude usage by John with reference to Jerusalem; the task remains for us to consider the corroborating evidence as to which referent is more likely in this context.

Language of Exaltation

A second difficulty with the Jerusalem view for some is the lofty language used by the author of Revelation to describe the city of Babylon, especially in 17:18 which reveals the identity of the harlot as "the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth" (hJ povli" hJ megavlh hJ e[cosa basileivan ejpiE tw'n basilevwn th" gh"). Most commentators make a very natural move in jumping to Rome as the most obvious candidate, considering the dominance of the empire in John's day.¹¹ From a sheer political standpoint, this seems very persuasive.

In order to deal with this objection, we must look at the two composite parts of this phrase individually in the light of their literary background within the context of Revelation. The first part, the title "the great city" seems at first glance an odd name to apply to Jerusalem, especially if considered in contrast to the glory of Rome. However, there is much to be said not only in defense, but also in favor of the Jerusalem view at this point from the perspective of historical sources as well a literary-contextual perspective within the bounds of the Apocalypse itself. There is strong precedent, and perhaps even direct indication that this phrase is synonymous with Jerusalem in the book, and such will become a major piece of

evidence for our view based on the more elaborate discussion of this specific question below under “‘The Great City’.” If the argument given there about this point stands, we need not discard the Jerusalem view as a reaction to the use of this phrase.¹²

The second part of the title, “which has dominion over the kings of the earth,” appears to be more difficult. Again, from a sheer political standpoint, this seems to be fairly straightforward. Rome would be an easy choice. Who else “has dominion over the kings of the earth”? Can this be said of Jerusalem in any sense?

Certainly, this is one of the more problematic issues for the Jerusalem view, but a case can be made that this sort of language is not out of line in a context such as this. There is in fact a fairly substantial precedent for similar hyperbolic language of exaltation for the city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament as well other early Jewish sources.¹³ For instance, in Ps 48:2, Jerusalem is said to be the “exultation of all the earth” because it is the “city of the great king”. The NET Bible, commenting on this verse, summarizes well: “The language is hyperbolic. Zion, as the dwelling place of the universal king, is pictured as the world’s capital.”¹⁴ Ford proposes that Rev 17:18 “is probably a similar hyperbole; cf. 4QLam which describes [Jerusalem] as ‘princess of all nations.’”¹⁵ The paradigm undergirding such descriptions is the preunderstanding that as God’s covenantal mediators, it is Israel through whom God exercises His kingly rule. The very fact that Jerusalem is called “the great city”¹⁶ at all during a time of pagan occupation shows that the author may be viewing it theologically, not with a political literalism, which would perhaps be out of place in the context of this work.¹⁷

In fact, we may have a good indicator within the text of the Apocalypse itself that this type of thinking lies behind the phraseology of 17:18. Specifically, there may be a literary connection with previous usage of this kind of language within Revelation. In 1:5, Christ himself is described as “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (οἰ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς). The term for ruling authority here is of course βασιλεῖς rather than βασιλεῖαν, but the meaning certainly overlaps with 17:18, and it seems likely that an allusion to the same concept or background is intended. In 1:5, the Old Testament text in the background is Ps 89:27,¹⁸ which is taken from a thoroughly messianic context. The overtones of the Psalm are overtly related to the implications of the Davidic Covenant, and being placed in the position of authority over the kings of the earth is construed as the messianic role. It seems probable, given the near identical phrasing, that 17:18 hearkens back to 1:5 and its allusion to Christ’s messianic rule. This then puts us at a crossroads. It is possible that this type of language is used at this point in the Apocalypse merely as a dark parody of the rule of Christ as manifest in Roman sovereignty (or whichever referent other than Jerusalem one might prefer). On the other hand, the messianic connotations of this language may narrow the options of what city should be in view here. It is quite plausible that the choice of this messianic terminology is most rightly associated with the messianic city, the place of the Davidic rule.¹⁹ It seems to me that this literary link should at least be given due consideration alongside the common reading based on the political atmosphere of the day.²⁰

Once again, there seem to be valid arguments on either side. The point to be made here is simply that there is enough credible evidence for the Jerusalem interpretation even in an apparent problem area such as this that we need not disregard

this theory from the outset. The case for the Jerusalem view must still be considered on the merits of the evidence in its favor.

The City on Seven Hills

Advocates of the Rome view have regularly argued that strong, if not conclusive support for their interpretation can be found in Rev 17:9 which describes the “seven hills/mountains” (εἰς ἑπτὰ ὄρη) on which the woman sits. It is beyond dispute that Rome was very commonly called the “city on seven hills” because of its topography.²¹ A number of references to this in ancient literature could be cited, including, for example, Virgil,²² Horace,²³ and Cicero.²⁴ Understandably then, many commentators see this verse as a clear indicator that John is speaking of Rome and doing so in the common language of the day.²⁵ Certainly, it cannot be denied that this is a very significant argument for the Rome view. However, this line of reasoning is not without its problems, and I believe there may be a more suitable understanding of this verse, one that seems to have been largely overlooked by most writers.

One hindrance to an assured link here is the question of how widespread this terminology for Rome really was. Few actually raise this issue, but the truth is that the evidence to which we have access only places this “seven hills” language in the Western Mediterranean regions. As far as whether this usage was familiar in the East, we simply do not know. There just is not any record to indicate this for us.²⁶ It may be hasty therefore to automatically presume that this Roman reference would be the shared understanding in Asia Minor.

It could be added, as Beale observes, that every other occurrence of ὄρη in Revelation refers to a mountain, not a “hill,” and this may caution us further against viewing 17:9 as a reference to the “hills” of Rome.²⁷ Certainly, the term can go either way lexically, but within the context of this book, a departure from the “mountain” image evoked elsewhere would be unexpected, and should probably be avoided in our translation if possible. A more likely connection is the association of mountains with the symbolism of power and kings/kingdoms that is to be found in the Old Testament and other Jewish works.²⁸ “Seven,” of course, is often symbolic of completion or perfection, and thus it may be that the seven mountains are best understood from a Jewish mindset as a symbol of completeness of authority, or fullness of royal power.²⁹ Still, in harmony with this imagery there is background material to be considered here that may very well give us insight into which royal power we are dealing with.

As a number of scholars have recognized, the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch bears numerous striking affinities with the Apocalypse of John; several are even persuaded of literary dependence of portions of the Apocalypse upon Enoch.³⁰ Others are more cautious; Bauckham for instance feels we may not have enough evidence to conclusively identify literary dependence on such a work, though the parallels that must be acknowledged at least give clear testimony to traditional imagery that was already prevalent in Jewish culture prior to Revelation.³¹

The significance of 1 Enoch for our study is that certain passages paint images that are intriguingly similar to Rev 17:9. In 1 Enoch 24–25,³² the writer describes his journey to a certain place on earth where he encounters a great mountain. This great mountain, as the angel Michael explains, is the location of “the throne of God ... on which the Holy and Great Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when

he descends to visit the earth with goodness.”³³ Furthermore, this place is associated with God’s end-time city-paradise where the elect will find the “fragrant tree” (v. 4) that will give them “fruit for life” (v. 5) in the eschaton, and this tree will be planted “upon the holy place” (v. 5). Clearly, in some sense Jerusalem (albeit in its eschatologically idealized form), or at least the future mountain-throne of Yahweh, is the site being painted with such gloriously vivid language. This passage is in fact regularly cited by commentators for background imagery underlying John’s depiction of the New Jerusalem with its great mountain, throne, and tree of life in Rev 21–22.³⁴

What is not mentioned in these discussions is that the passage also says this great mountain is seated among “seven dignified mountains” (24:2). These “seven mountains” (v. 3) are elaborately described as to their appearance and formation in 24:2–3, and the central, taller mountain of the seven is then revealed as the place of God’s earthly rule (25:3–6).³⁵

In surveying the major commentaries, I have been surprised to find no mention of this passage in connection with Rev 17:9, though it is repeatedly cited as background for the New Jerusalem.³⁶ If this passage of Enoch bears such close resemblance to the Apocalypse, how is it that an apparent reference to Jerusalem sitting on “seven mountains” is ignored? Is this not easily as significant as the typically cited idiom for Rome? Interestingly, Beale references 4 Ezra for more imagery of the restored Jerusalem, and even notes that work’s amplification of “great mountain” imagery to “seven great mountains,”³⁷ yet he makes no connection with the “seven mountains” of Revelation.³⁸ This seems an unfortunate oversight. Nonetheless, this gives a second example in the apocalyptic tradition for portraying the place of God’s future earthly rule (no doubt the idealized Jerusalem) as located among seven mountains.³⁹

Based on this evidence, I do not find the “city on seven hills” argument for Rome to be as persuasive as I once did. It would seem that a very compelling case can be made that the stream of Jewish apocalyptic tradition energizing Revelation more naturally evokes the image of Jerusalem as the city seated on seven mountains in 17:9 than Rome. The view that Babylon is a cipher for Jerusalem in the Apocalypse cannot then be dismissed on the basis of this common objection; not only can it be defended that the evidence of 17:9 can fit Jerusalem, there are strong reasons to believe that it in fact does most properly fit Jerusalem.⁴⁰

Idolatry after the Exile

It has been argued by some that the element of idolatry in Rev 17–18 strongly militates against the possibility that Jerusalem is being described because Judaism was, in the first century, strictly monotheistic, and never compromised with the idolatry of their pagan neighbors.⁴¹ This would seem to make it difficult to maintain that the Jewish leadership is being portrayed as idolatrous at the time of the writing of the Apocalypse, especially when Rome’s rampant idolatry is so historically notorious.

However, we may be missing John’s point if we assume that only literal idols can be the issue in a book full of symbolic polemic. There is in fact very good reason to suppose otherwise when we consider the connotations of idolatry in the book, especially in the letters. There is much to be said here, but for now I would simply note that certain parallels set forth in earlier sections of Revelation strongly imply that the idolatry with which John is concerned is related to the

“paganism” of Jewish rejection of Christ and aggravation and persecution of the saints in collaboration with Roman authority. This will be elaborated at some length below under “False Jews and Idolatry,” and if the connection is defensible, the idolatry question should not be seen as an obstacle to the Jerusalem = Babylon position.

Extent of Sea Trade

One final objection commonly leveled against the Jerusalem interpretation of the harlot is the great wealth and extensive sea trade described in chapter 18. This imagery is seen by many to be clearly indicative of Rome (or at least some ideal or future world dominating power) in its sheer vastness.⁴² Much ink has been spilled over the economic elements of this passage, yet while such discussions are understandable when we consider the extravagant language of the chapter, they may be misguided. Old Testament scholar Iain Provan has recently argued that the form of the passage recalls familiar lament song patterns from the Old Testament tradition, and that the function of the use of this form is to echo God’s past judgment of pagan peoples, rather than highlighting the economic details, which, according to Provan, are likely simply the carry-over of the language of the original songs that are being reused.⁴³ The point of the rhetoric would not be to actually focus on financial abuses, but rather to compare the fall of the city in the present context to the fall of other pagan peoples in the Old Testament. To this end Provan asks poignantly (regarding Rev 18’s list of cargoes), “[D]oes this list signify economic critique of Rome as such, or is it there simply because it is the sort of thing that one finds in biblical laments and dirges?”⁴⁴

Moreover, the especially striking thing about Provan’s article is that in considering the actual contents of the text from this perspective, he finds certain details to have been altered from the original Old Testament source material that is being reapplied. These alterations, he argues, all amend the lament song for Babylon with embellishments that redirect the critique to another city, namely, Jerusalem.⁴⁵ In fact, whereas many New Testament scholars have found the language of chapter eighteen to be fatal to a Jerusalem reading, Provan (rather than being persuaded to a Jerusalem interpretation on the basis of the literary features of chapter seventeen that compel most advocates of this view), as an Old Testament scholar, is primarily persuaded that Jerusalem is in view precisely because of what he sees at work in John’s crafting of Rev 18, and he argues the case from this evidence.⁴⁶

If Provan is accurately grasping John’s use of the Old Testament here, then something that has been seen as an obstacle to the Jerusalem view may actually turn out to be a supporting argument for it. Some of the key elements of this proposition will be examined in more detail under the section entitled “Economic critique and Revelation 18,” but the point to be made for this stage of the argument is that it seems fair to say that all of the major objections to seeing Jerusalem in this passage are manageable, at least to varying degrees. Moreover, as we have noted, in several cases a deeper investigation of the issues behind the objections may in fact reveal that these too hint at Jerusalem.

The Case for Jerusalem

It is hoped at this point that at the least a fair case has been made that these more difficult elements of the discussion can be made to fit with the view being proposed by this thesis with

a reasonable amount of exegetical credibility. Given thoughtful investigation, none of the objections raised decisively precludes Jerusalem as the harlot of the Apocalypse. The burden of proof still lies on the cumulative evidence that can be used to support this interpretation. Therefore, having surveyed the major solutions that have been proposed for this passage, and having now taken into account the primary objections to the solution proposed by this thesis, the case for Jerusalem will be set forth.

“The Great City”

One of the simplest, yet strongest clues that Jerusalem is to be understood as the harlot of Babylon is that John seems to give the answer away directly to the observant reader in a couple of key places in Revelation. At the end of chapter 17, the interpreting angel tells John the identity of the adulterous woman explicitly: “The woman whom you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth” (hJ gunhÉ h)n eĩde" e[stin hJ povli" hJ megavlh hJ e[cousa basileivan ejpiÉ tw'n basilevwn th'" gh"). This phrase “the great city” seems to be set forth with the assumption that the reader knows what city that would be, and the phrase is tossed around several more times in this passage.⁴⁷ Moreover, the phrase appears to be used quite exclusively in the book of Revelation. Outside of this passage, in which it occurs many times, all of which clearly refer to Babylon, the phrase only appears twice in the rest of this twenty-two-chapter book. The first, and most important occurrence of the designation “the great city” is in 11:8, which reads, “And [the two witnesses] bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (toÉ ptw'ma aujtw'n ejpiÉ th'" plateiva" th'" povlew" th'" megavlh" h{ti" kalei'tai pneumatikw'" Sovdoma kaiÉ Ai[gupto" o[pou kaiÉ oJ kuvrio" aujtw'n ejstaurwvqh).⁴⁸ This verse is extremely significant. In it, we have two major pieces of information relevant to our study.

First, it is all but indisputable that “the great city” as identified here is Jerusalem, “where also their Lord was crucified.”⁴⁹ This alone sets a powerful precedent for the term before we come to chapters 17 and 18. This term is not used carelessly for many cities in the book, but rather only twice without explicit reference to Babylon. It is hard to imagine this reference not ringing in the ears of the original audience when they would arrive at 17:18. It would easily be the most natural step, if a somewhat shocking one.

Secondly, the writer also sets a precedent for using metaphorical names for Jerusalem, specifically names of Israel's ancient enemies. This tells us two things: we should not be surprised if he does it again, and Jerusalem is being painted in a very negative light in Revelation.

A similar occurrence of the phrase “the great city” is found in 16:19, where again we have a vital clue to the identity of the harlot who appears later. The verse reads, “And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell” (kaiÉ ejgevneto hJ povli" hJ megavlh ejj" triva mevrh kaiÉ aiJ povlei" tw'n ejqnw'n e[pevan). The key point to be made here is that “the great city” is apparently contrasted with “the cities of the nations.” It could be that the great city is merely one of the cities of the nations, but it seems more likely that the two are to be distinguished; we are not told that the other cities of the nations fell, just that the cities of the nations fell, as distinct from the great city. As Ford comments, “The juxtaposition of this phrase with the ‘cities of the nations’

suggests that it is not a Gentile location, such as Rome.”⁵⁰ This also becomes more probable in light of the lexical ambiguity of the Greek. For neutrality's sake, the translation given above has simply rendered tw'n ejqnw'n “of the nations.” In Greek, of course, the term may be translated either in this manner or more specifically as “of the Gentiles.” The NET Bible notes this as an alternative translation, and if we take this option, the text is even more telling. In this case “the great city” would be juxtaposed against “the cities of the Gentiles.” In light of the last use of “the great city,” in which it was identified as the place “where also their Lord was crucified,” this does not seem unlikely. What makes this especially significant for our present study is that this verse may bridge the gap between 11:8 and 17:18 in that the remaining portion of 16:19 fills out the image of this “great city” by identifying it explicitly as Babylon.

In addition, this interpretation can be further validated by the Old Testament background of the city's fate in this passage. As several commentators have recognized, the splitting of the city into three parts seems to echo Ezek 5:1–5 in which God has the prophet divide his hair into three parts as a depiction of coming judgment upon a city, specifically, the desolation of Jerusalem, which will occur in thirds.⁵¹ Taking together the precedent of Rev 11:8, the contrast with the cities of the nations/Gentiles, and the background of Ezek 5, we have very compelling reasons to think 16:9, like 11:8, may be referring to Jerusalem as “the great city.” Not only that, “the great city” is here also clearly connected to the name “Babylon.” Again, these are the only two references to “the great city” in the book before we get to chapter 17. There is no other “great city” to be found in the Apocalypse, no other precedent to follow. If Jerusalem is not the harlot, it is worth asking at this point why John, who uses the phrase “the great city” so colorfully in chapters 17 and 18 has been so uncaring as to let it slip at two other places in the book, both of which would likely lead one to see Jerusalem as God's enemy, if not Babylon itself.⁵²

One other similar phenomenon occurs in chapter 14, in which “the winepress was trodden outside the city” (ejpathvqh hJ lhnoÉ" e[xwqen th'" povlew" [14:20]). Almost all interpreters identify this city as Jerusalem⁵³ (due to the grapes/vine imagery that is so commonly associated with Israel in the Old Testament⁵⁴), yet the only “city” mentioned thus far in the chapter is “Babylon the great” (BabulwÉn hJ megavlh) in verse 8. The identification seems to be taken for granted. If this is the case, then all three passages in the book that anticipate the revealing of “the great city” in chapters 17 and 18 can be said to be evocative of, if not indicative of Jerusalem, and this necessarily sets a powerfully consistent motif in the mind of the reader by the time these later chapters are encountered.

Her Adornment

When we examine chapters 17–18, one striking feature of the image of the harlot we see emphasized is her adornment. She is arrayed in “purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (porfurou'n kaiÉ kovkkinon kaiÉ kecruswmevnh crusivw/ kaiÉ livqw/ timivw/ kaiÉ margarivtai" [17:4; 18:16]). As Beale observes, this combination of words in the Greek is identical to the LXX description of the high priest's garments.⁵⁵ In other words, the city is being represented as having the role of high priest, or at least an association with the Jewish priestly system. Certainly Jerusalem is the most natural referent.⁵⁶ It is also interesting

to note a comment by Josephus that the veil covering the temple gate (which was over 80 feet high and 24 feet wide) was “a Babylonian curtain, embroidered with blue, and fine linen [cf. Rev 18:16], and scarlet, and purple.”⁵⁷ There may be no connection—the LXX reference is a stronger link—but it is not unreasonable to wonder if this could possibly have been in the mind of John at the time of the writing of Revelation. Regardless, the high priestly nature of Jerusalem seems to be the point of this attire.

Harlotry in the Prophets

One of the most important issues in this discussion is the meaning of harlotry in prophetic literature. The woman in Rev 17 and 18 is depicted as “the great harlot ... with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication” (th^u povrn^h th^u megavl^h . . . meq j hl^u ejpovrneusan oiJ basilei^u th^u gh^u [17:1–2]), “the mother of harlots” (hJ mhvthr tw'n pornw'n [17:5]), and related images. Her fornications are the reason for her judgment (ch. 18). This theme cannot be overemphasized. In the Old Testament prophets, the imagery of a people or city committing adultery, or being labeled a harlot, is consistently a reference to covenant unfaithfulness.⁵⁸ A multitude of passages in various prophetic books use the harlotry theme to condemn Israel for her sin.⁵⁹ In fact, of the many passages that illustrate this constant theme, the only two exceptions to Israel being the referent are two prophecies against Tyre⁶⁰ and Nineveh⁶¹, both of which had formerly been in covenant with Yahweh.⁶²

The point here is too consistent to be overlooked: one cannot commit adultery against God if one is not married to God. It is difficult to conceive of any city other than Jerusalem that would be described as the covenant-breaking harlot in Revelation, especially in light of the dozens of times she has been given this appellation already throughout the Old Testament.⁶³ It would be highly unprecedented to expect another referent. Over and over again in biblical prophecy, Israel is the harlot.⁶⁴ This issue becomes all the more striking when we recognize that a great deal of the substance of Revelation comes from John's reapplication of the contents of Ezekiel,⁶⁵ a work which is consumed largely with the prediction of Jerusalem's approaching destruction because of her great adultery, which is followed by a vision of the New Jerusalem. The connection is not insignificant.

Lastly, on this point, it is worth noting that the call for the harlot to be repaid “double according to her deeds” (taÉ dipla' kataÉ taÉ e[rga aujth^u [18:6]) is used in the Old Testament only against God's people, Israel.⁶⁶ The Old Testament image of the doom of Babylon has been conflated with language from the prophetic tradition against Jerusalem. Moreover this is no anomaly—this is a common pattern throughout the entire section.

Her Forehead

“And upon her forehead a name was written a name, a mystery, ‘Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth’” (kaiÉ ejpiÉ toÉ mev^utwpon aujth^u o[noma gegrammevnon, musthvri^uon, BabulwÉn hJ megavl^h, hJ mhvthr tw'n pornw'n kaiÉ tw'n bdelugmavtwn th^u gh^u [17:5]). The writing of this title on the woman's forehead seems to hearken back primarily to two Old Testament texts, both of which are incriminating for Jerusalem as the harlot. The most obvious is Jer 3:3,⁶⁷ in which God says of Israel, “You had a harlot's forehead” (%l'ê hy^uh^u hn^u“Az hV^uŪai). The

other is Exod 28:36–38, in which the high priest's cap (which, as Beale observes, is also made of some of the same materials as the high priest's garment discussed above⁶⁸) is to have written on it “Holy to the LORD” (hw^u)hyl;(vd,qO). This gives stark contrast to the figure wearing the priestly colors in Revelation, whose forehead bears the title “mother of harlots.” Regardless of which passage is the greater influence here, both seem to point in the same direction.⁶⁹

On the other hand, it is commonly claimed that the forehead writing here is to be associated with the Greco-Roman culture of the day, in which prostitutes are said to have worn headbands with their names on them.⁷⁰ However, the evidence for this practice is less than scanty, and several scholars are now questioning its occurrence altogether.⁷¹ Nevertheless, even if this custom could be tied to history, should it really be considered a more likely background for the imagery than the Old Testament precedent of Jer 3:3? This Old Testament source is especially significant in light of the fact that, in the succinct words of Beagley, “Jeremiah soon afterwards warns faithless Judah that, dressed in scarlet as she was, her lovers have turned upon her and are now seeking to kill her.”⁷² Read in concert with the gruesome turn of events in Rev 17:16, in which the beast and the ten horns turn on their mistress the harlot and destroy her, this passage gives us several strong links to Jerusalem.

False Jews and Idolatry

In the Old Testament passages regarding harlotry, often idolatry is a large part of the “spiritual adultery,” and this seems to belong to the images of compromise with the nations and being involved with “unclean things” and “abominations” in Rev 17 and 18 as well.⁷³ As we discussed before, some have therefore objected to the Jerusalem view on the basis that first-century Judaism was not given to idolatry, and did not compromise with Rome.⁷⁴ This, however, overlooks certain factors.

For several reasons, “idolatry” as a concept should perhaps not be too concretely limited in this context. Chapters 2–3 in fact may give us something of a hint of the kind of “idolatry” that is plaguing many of the churches of John's day. The letters to the seven churches are often noted for their literary crafting, which probably reflects quite a bit of subtle theological design, rather than merely epistolary form and content.

For instance, it is likely that the letters serve to introduce many of the themes of the book, and they also clearly form a chiasmic pattern.⁷⁵ Moreover, it has been argued that the individual letters follow the so-called “covenant” form of ancient Near Eastern treaties, much like the Book of Deuteronomy.⁷⁶ These features are mentioned here simply to highlight the point that we ought not be surprised to find theological motifs being hinted at in these passages, both structurally and symbolically. There is, in other words, legitimate reason to not view these letters as mere letters.

The significance of this observation for the present discussion is that the theme of idolatry is certainly very important in the seven letters,⁷⁷ and we may find subtle hints in this section of John's connotations for the concept. Specifically, there are parallels between the heresies condemned in the letters that have been regularly recognized by commentators, parallels, in fact, that are so close that these heresies are generally considered to be the same idolatrous teaching under different names, at least in the cases of the Nicolaitans, the Balaamites,

and Jezebel.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is instantly recognizable that the latter two echo names of Old Testament figures, and should therefore automatically strike a chord with us that there is perhaps some form of intentional symbolism being implied. As far as the Nicolaitans, few commentators have been able to find a satisfactory connection as to the identity of these aggravators.⁷⁹ However it is often noted that part of the reason the Nicolaitans and the Balaamites should be so closely identified is the similar etymology of their names, which is related to one who “overcomes/consumes the people.”⁸⁰ It may be that the name of the Nicolaitans is based on a Greek translation of Balaam’s name. Regardless of whether that oversimplifies the matter, the semantic connection here that parallels with the heretical connection gives further justification for supposing we may be dealing with the same problematic teaching, which is then recapitulated in Jezebel. Moreover, the two Old Testament characters utilized here happen to be a false prophet and a harlot, two roles that will be played by villainous figures in later chapters of the Apocalypse.⁸¹ If valid, this connection seems fairly significant, in that it may mean the letters are subtly introducing the themes that will later be developed in the rest of the book, and this type of structuring and theological insinuation would certainly not be out of character with the multi-layered literary sophistication we find pervading the book.⁸²

There is, however, one other key worker of evil in the Apocalypse, the driving force behind the entire iniquitous drama—the Serpent, Satan himself. In perfect harmony with the pattern above, Satan too is revealed in the letters, especially in the letter to Pergamum. This city is depicted as the place where Satan has his throne, and there too, the people are plagued by the teachings of the Balaamites and Nicolaitans. The idolatry into which these teachers are leading the people is tied to the hidden forces of the Dragon, who is working the whole wicked scheme from behind the curtains. In fact, he is not only working in these contexts that appear to be what we would consider blatant idolatry, he is also rearing his scaly head in two other places in the letters. In the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia, we are told of a sinister “synagogue of Satan” (sunagwghÉ tou' satana'), composed of “those who call themselves Jews and are not” (tw'n legovntwn jIoudaivou" eínai eJautou" kaiÉ oujk eijsivn).⁸³ The language of being a “synagogue of Satan” quickly declares one thing: the Judaism in view is considered paganism. While purporting to be the worship of Israel, it has become idolatry; these are not “true” Jews. This then gives us a remarkable precedent for the meaning of idolatry and pagan worship in Revelation. Especially when we consider the fact that the Satanic teaching in all of the other church contexts was essentially synonymous, it is quite possible that apostate Judaism is here being given the connotations of idolatry, in keeping with the parallels in the other letters, and this sets the stage for later stark portrayals of non-Christian Judaism such as Rev 11:8.

Naturally, the “paganism” of which these false Jews are guilty cannot be separated from interaction with Rome. If the basic contention of this thesis is correct and the Babylon of chapters 17–18 represents apostate Jerusalem, then chapter 18 certainly links much of her sin to compromise with other nations. Similarly, chapter 17 focuses on the harlot’s riding of the beast, using its authority to persecute the saints and commit sin. This depiction, while quite disturbing, would be very appropriate from John’s perspective for those who are

working with Roman power to persecute the followers of Christ.

Furthermore, the Jerusalem leadership was certainly guilty of the ultimate pagan compromise with Rome, the rejection and crucifixion of Christ Himself. This would more than qualify as sufficient basis for seeing Jerusalem as having committed adultery with Rome’s paganism, and as having rejected the true God. No doubt this event would have left a permanent impact on John’s view of Jerusalem as one who makes illicit ties with an idolatrous nation for her own rebellious gain.⁸⁴

Economic Critique and Revelation 18.

As we have discussed above, certain elements of chapter 18 are often seen as troublesome for a Jerusalem connection to Babylon, especially the vast nature of the sea trade described and the overall economic power and influence. In fact, in the beginning stages of compiling the research for this thesis, I must admit that I found this problem quite difficult to handle as well, and wondered if there was a reasonable response to this objection at all. While other evidences seemed quite persuasive for the Jerusalem view, this questioned appeared at least as of yet unanswered, if not unanswerable.

For this reason I am quite indebted at this point to the work of Old Testament scholar Iain Provan, whose article mentioned above, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance: Revelation 18 From an Old Testament Perspective,” has been a welcome source of insights. For Provan, the complex language of Rev 18 is not only not a hindrance to a Jerusalem perspective, it is one of the strongest arguments for it. Provan’s contention throughout is that it is a false assumption that the detail of imagery present in a passage such as this must be taken at face value in all its particulars as a literal description of the situation of the day when the language being employed is clearly a reapplication of a major portion of an Old Testament text. His reason for believing this is related to his own study in the area of traditional “lament songs,” which informs his understanding of the use of such language in this passage.⁸⁵ Clearly the “lament” form is at work in Rev 18, as is plain from the fact that much of the content is taken from a previous lament for Tyre found in Ezek 26–28 (combined of course with OT oracle language against Babylon, the namesake of Revelation’s “great city”). The use of such a traditional form is significant to Provan, who notes, “[I]t is not simply Old Testament language and imagery which has shaped Revelation 18, but also the very form and structure of Old Testament texts—the very manner in which they have been composed.”⁸⁶

The general point that is relevant here is whether we should look for historical reference for each detail of such a reapplication of imagery, or whether the function of the imagery is more properly to provide an echo of the form traditionally used when a city such as Tyre falls from a great height. For instance, regarding the vivid list of cargoes given by John (18:12-13), Provan asks, “[D]oes this list signify economic critique of Rome as such, or is it there simply because it is the sort of thing that one finds in biblical laments and dirges?”⁸⁷ In other words, if the author is employing Old Testament language to express the fall of a city or people in familiar prophetic terms, can we be sure we have warrant to read the language as (for the author) contemporarily literally applicable? Again, “How can one say [as Bauckham does] that the presence of wheat on John’s list [of cargoes] shows how the general population of Rome survived only at the expense

of the rest of the empire, when wheat appears on the very list in Ezek 27 that provides the basis for John's list?"⁸⁸ No doubt the details could correspond, but the fact that they are employed rhetorically for their connotations with the fall of arrogant enemies of God in the Old Testament calls us to consider hermeneutical questions of whether the language demands historical correspondence, or is rather subservient to the driving point of the severity of the fall of a people judged by God. The point may simply be, "You, 'Babylon,' are tragically fallen just as Tyre and historical Babylon before you."⁸⁹ This is certainly the great thrust of the passage; whether or not there is reason to seek application for all of the details is an area that must be admitted to involve some degree of ambiguity. Caution seems quite justified, however, when we recognize the fact that the details cannot even be made to comfortably fit Rome (for most, the necessary referent of the passage) with consistent literalism either, considering it was not a major seaport or trading city.⁹⁰

However, the argument of Provan's article is not merely that we ought not get caught up in the details of material that is being structurally appropriated for a rhetorical point. The issue that catches his eye is the fact that at many points, the author of Revelation does not leave the reapplied language in its original form, but instead subtly alters it. It is these fresh literary features, not the details imported from a previous context, that may be of most use to us for tracking with John's thought. It is these areas in which he has not merely compared the present villain to previous ones, but has added original critique to the message, and has perhaps hinted at the identity of his antagonist.⁹¹

Examples of this phenomenon noted by Provan include the addition of chariots to Ezekiel's cargo list (quite likely an import from the list of goods in 1 Kgs 4, which subtly reminds the Old Testament audience of Solomon's disregarding of the former command not to widely accrue horses and chariots in Deut 17:16),⁹² the language of the "clinging" of the harlot's sins (the term *kollaww*, having LXX covenant language connotations, being added to a Babylon oracle [v. 5]),⁹³ the use of an Old Testament oracle against Judah and Jerusalem in verses 23–24 in the middle of borrowed Tyre lament language,⁹⁴ the double recompense (in the Old Testament, only ever used against Israel) warning of verse 2 in the middle of Babylon allusions, and a number of echoes of passages from Lamentations reflecting on Jerusalem's fall.⁹⁵

The point of this sampling is simply to show that it is quite plausible that what the author is doing here is adapting an Old Testament lament song for his own purposes by invoking Jerusalem judgment language at various points, thereby redirecting the reader to the true identity of this harlot. Whether this evidence on its own is as noteworthy as the precedent of Rev 11:8, the attire of the woman, or the charge of adultery is up for discussion. But the cumulative evidence of the use of the Old Testament in chapter 18 was at least enough to get one Old Testament scholar's attention.

The Origin of This Image

As we have said before, we do not necessarily have to find any previous instance of Jerusalem being called Babylon outside of Revelation in order to take this possibility seriously here—it could simply have originated with John's vision. But there is perhaps more that can be said on this issue. Is John truly without precedent in this application of imagery? If this proposal had already existed in early Christianity, we would

certainly have a much stronger case that this is John's intention. And, in fact, I think a case can be made that such a precedent can be found for equating Babylon with Jerusalem; moreover, the precedent is drawn from one of John's most substantial influences, the teaching of our Lord Jesus Himself.

In the Olivet Discourse, Christ prophetically warns of Jerusalem's impending doom. Even among those who prefer to keep preterism at a distance it is generally a universal recognition that at least some of Jesus' words apply to A.D. 70. The point worth noting here is that while it is obvious that much of Jesus' language alludes to the Old Testament, it may not be as obvious what many of the allusions have in common. Specifically, N. T. Wright has extensively argued that much of the discourse is heavily dependent upon prophecies of the destruction of one particular enemy of the people of God: Babylon.⁹⁶ This is especially true of the warnings for the people of God to flee the city when her judgment has come, which eerily echo the "Come out from her!" passages of Jeremiah.⁹⁷

Beagley likewise sees this motif underlying the discourse, and approvingly notes van der Waal's suggestion that Christ is specifically applying Jer 51:45 (concerning Babylon) to Jerusalem.⁹⁸ The scenario we may have on the Mount of Olives, then, is this: Christ warning of impending judgment, warning the people of God to escape when they can, and pronouncing Old Testament prophecies directly against Jerusalem, when these prophecies were known to originally apply to Babylon. In Wright's words, "Luke's reading of Mark is quite clear: all this language refers to the fall of Jerusalem, which is to be understood against the background of the predicted destruction of Babylon."⁹⁹ If this is correct, the paradox must have been truly shocking. One can imagine the disciples' absolute astonishment as they began to realize the horrifically ironic implications of Jesus applying these words to their great city. "He's calling Jerusalem Babylon!" perhaps quickly became an uncomfortable whisper among the men. Again, Wright remarks, "Here ... is the all-important change of roles. Jerusalem has become Babylon; Jesus and His disciples have become Jerusalem," and, "The new Babylon was to be destroyed in an instant, and flight was the only appropriate action, the only way of salvation for Jesus' renewed Israel."¹⁰⁰

If such a reconstruction is valid, we must take seriously the impact this event would have had on John's thinking.¹⁰¹ If this interpretation is correct, then John would not be inventing the "Jerusalem has become Babylon" theme. Rather, it would have originated with Jesus. In composing the Apocalypse, John's use of this imagery would be a natural retelling of Jesus' own teaching. And, of course, many have noted the point that much of Revelation seems to simply be a reworking of the Olivet Discourse.¹⁰² It would be of no surprise, then, if this metaphor reappeared with more vivid narration. Not to mention the fact that if much of Revelation truly is, to whatever extent, a rehashing of Olivet themes, then Jerusalem's impending judgment, an important emphasis of the discourse, has a high probability of being a primary theme in the Apocalypse as well. Indeed, it would perhaps be somewhat surprising if this were not so.

It seems, then, that a very plausible scenario can be constructed out of which John would have likely produced the depiction of Jerusalem as the enemy Babylon. This certainly does not prove that such must be the case, but it does give some roots of credibility to the hypothesis.

The Blood of the Saints and Prophets

One of the most important themes in Revelation that seems to have been drawn from Jesus' prophetic warnings in the gospels is that "in her [Babylon] was found the blood of the prophets and saints and all who have been slain upon the earth" (18:24).¹⁰³ This is almost unmistakably a reference to Jesus' words found in Matthew 23:34–35: "... I am sending to you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, so that upon you might fall all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Luke 11:50–51: "... in order that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be required from this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary; yes, I say to you, it will be required of this generation."¹⁰⁵

While Rome certainly had her hands stained with Christian blood, as Gentry points out they could not be charged with the death of the Old Testament prophets,¹⁰⁶ especially in light of Jesus' direct charge to Jerusalem that she will be held responsible. Again, if we can suppose John's dependence upon Christ's prophetic teachings, then Jerusalem must be most appropriately understood as the guilty party indicted in Rev 18:24.

Her Desolation by the Beast

Another point that should not be overlooked is how well Jerusalem fits into the picture of Babylon's fate at the hands of the beast. Here the Rome view runs into great difficulty because of the fact that the beast is viewed by just about everyone as having some link to Rome.¹⁰⁷ But in chapter 17, the beast and the harlot not only interact, the beast even hates and destroys the harlot. This prompts Beagley to ask, "[I]n what sense can it be said that the Empire or one specific Emperor turns against the capital city and destroys it? How can Rome destroy Rome?"¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, this probably overstates the issue, in that Nero's apparent role in the fire at Rome (A.D. 64) could fit this image quite reasonably.¹⁰⁹ But while this approach cannot be dismissed outright, it may not do sufficient justice to the distinction between the two characters.

If, however, Jerusalem is the harlot attacked by beastly Rome, the imagery in 17:16 makes obvious sense: "... the beast ... will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will devour her flesh and will burn her up with fire." This certainly fits perfectly against the backdrop of the Olivet Discourse,¹¹⁰ and sounds very much like a reference to the events of A.D. 70. Interestingly, Beale gives lengthy treatment to the dependence of the imagery in this verse upon Old Testament descriptions of Jerusalem's impending destruction, yet stops short of granting what might seem to be the natural implications of this phenomenon:

The portrayal of the harlot's desolation is sketched according to the outlines of the prophecy of apostate Jerusalem's judgment by God in Ezek. 23:25–29, 47: "your survivors will be devoured by the fire ... they will also strip you of your clothes ... and they will deal with you in hatred ... and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries will be uncovered ... they will burn their houses with fire."

Likewise, Ezek. 16:37–41 prophesies against faithless Israel: "I will gather together all your lovers with whom you have consorted ... they will break down your house of harlotry...and they will leave you naked ... they will burn your houses with fire." ... The Ezekiel picture is supplemented by similar OT descriptions of Israel's coming judgment, which prophesy that God "will strip her naked and ... make her desolate" (Hosea 2:3; cf. also Jeremiah 10:25; 41:22 LXX; Micah 3:3 ...).¹¹¹

Note the consistency of the application of this language to apostate Israel. It seems difficult to imagine the weight of this background not giving the original readers the sense that Jerusalem is the city being made desolate in 17:16, especially if the aggressor is understood to be Rome.¹¹²

Milligan solemnly elaborates:

[I]t is difficult not to think that there was one great drama present to the mind of the Seer and suggestive of the picture of the harlot's ruin, that of the life and death of Jesus. The degenerate Jewish Church had then called in the assistance of the world-power of Rome, had stirred it up, and had persuaded it to do its bidding against its true Bridegroom and King. An alliance had been formed between them; and, as a result of it, they crucified the Lord of glory. But the alliance was soon broken; and, in the fall of Jerusalem by the hands of her guilty paramour, the harlot was left desolate and naked, her flesh was eaten, and she was burned utterly with fire.¹¹³

New Jerusalem/Old Jerusalem (or The Bride Versus the Harlot)

Finally, a consideration of a general theme of the Apocalypse may serve to bookend the evidence on this matter quite neatly, particularly that of the contrast between Babylon and the New Jerusalem of chapter 21. Revelation is full of "yin/yang" style contrasts, including the Lamb versus the Dragon, the Father's name versus the beast's name on people's foreheads, and, here, the image of the bride versus the harlot, or, New Jerusalem versus Babylon.¹¹⁴ As was mentioned before, it is not a great leap from the apparent background of Jeremiah 3 (which includes Yahweh's "divorcing" of Israel for harlotry) in our Babylon passage to the estimation that the harlot in Revelation is being dismissed by God as an unfit wife for Christ. There is clearly a deliberate literary contrast present between the bride of chapter 21 and the harlot of chapters 17–18 in the language of their respective (and closely parallel) introductions, characterizations, and environments.¹¹⁵

As we have already noted, Jerusalem's rejection of her Messiah, who had come as her husband, sets the stage for the Messiah to take another bride. And if this new bride is called the "New" Jerusalem, a likely corollary is that the former, unfaithful woman was the Old Jerusalem.¹¹⁶ This ties the two sections together perfectly and logically, and suddenly creates a very natural harmony of purpose and flow of thought for the Apocalypse in broad strokes. Simply stated, it makes much sense of the book.

This, then, is the bulk of the evidence for the Jerusalem view, evidence which I think is highly significant. Certain points may be stronger than others, but overall I think their cumulative weight warrants careful consideration.

1 Cf. 4 Ezra 3:1–2, 28–31; 2 Apoc Bar 10:1–3; 11:1; 67:7; Sib. Or. 5:143159–60.

2 See Adela Yarbro Collins, "Myth and History in the Book of

- Revelation: The Problem of Its Date,” in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 388; also, G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 19.
- 3 Although, see E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, *Biblical Interpretation Series*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Rolf Rendtorff, vol. 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 211, who argues for first-century B.C. examples of this association from Pss. Sol. 8.15 and 1QpHab 2.
- 4 Beale, *Revelation*, 25.
- 5 Perhaps the Qumran community, as a counter-temple movement, could be the exception and a possible candidate to use such language against Jerusalem, but of course their not doing so proves nothing for us. It is interesting to note, however, that they do frequently treat Jerusalem in harlotry language. The consistent application of this terminology in line with OT usage was in fact one of the decisive arguments for Ford, who makes much of the Qumran evidence for her Babylon = Jerusalem case (J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, *Anchor Bible*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 38 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975], 276–307).
- 6 Isa 1:10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:44–58.
- 7 Beale, *Revelation*, 25. Interestingly, Beale also speaks of precedent for Israel being referred to as Egypt (*ibid.*), but all of the passages he cites (all of which are listed in n. 6, above) are examples of the Sodom language. In fact, I know of no passage in the OT that uses Egypt in this way (cf. Ford, *Revelation*, 172; David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* [Tyler, TX: Dominion, 1987], 281). Beale’s apparent oversight here is interesting because of the fact that Rev 11:8 uses both Sodom and Egypt with reference to Jerusalem. If John can use Egypt for Jerusalem without precedent, why not Babylon? This seems to more or less cancel out Beale’s argument.
- 8 Even if Daniel is taken to be late, it is written from the perspective of the Babylonian era.
- 9 Cf. Rev 11:8.
- 10 J. Christian Wilson, “Babylon as a Cipher for Rome and the Dating of Early Jewish and Early Christian Documents,” unpublished paper read at the 1994 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, cited in Beale, *Revelation*, 19. Apparently, Wilson has surveyed OT, LXX, DSS, and Pseudepigraphal sources. Beale questions the strength of Wilson’s handling of the background sources, but no explicit counter-evaluation is given (*ibid.*).
- 11 So Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911), 226; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 221; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, *Black’s New Testament Commentaries*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Black, 1966), 216–17; et al.
- 12 In preview, I would simply note there are very telling uses of this phrase, as well as the similar, shortened title “the city,” in three other locations in Revelation, specifically 11:8, 14:20, and 16:19, all of which imply, if not require a Jerusalem association.
- 13 E.g., Ps 48:2; Isa 2:2–3; Lam 1:1; 2:15; Mic 4:1–2; Gen R. 23:10; Exod R. 23:10; also, Matt 5:35; so Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 443; Kenneth L. Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. C. Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 74.
- 14 The NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 956, n. 11.
- 15 Ford, *Revelation*, 285. See also the thorough discussion of this tendency in Jewish thought by Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 127–28. Kraus argues heavily that ancient Jews saw the world, even in times of oppression, as under the rulership of the Davidic dynasty, because God had chosen Israel and established Jerusalem as His world’s capital.
- 16 As it is in Rev 11:8.
- 17 It could also be pointed out that there is strong precedent for the use of the title “the great city” for Jerusalem in several ancient Jewish sources, especially Jer 22:8; Sib. Or. 5.154, 226, 413; cf. Josephus *Against Apion* 1.197, 209. This is certainly not conclusive, but rather corroborative, especially considering the fact that Rome also receives the title in some writers (e.g., b. Pesahim 118b; Pesikta Rabbati 14).
- 18 This is clear from the connection between the “kings of the earth” and “firstborn” language.
- 19 In support of this possibility we may note that the language here employed is only applied in Revelation to Christ and the great city.
- 20 It might be objected that it would be contradictory for Jerusalem to be simultaneously portrayed as both glorious and adulterous. But this is where the brutal irony of the rhetoric lies. Though God has declared her His world capital and wife, she has played the harlot. She has been established as the queen, but her sins have caught up with her, and she will reap the consequences (For more on this, see below, “Harlotry in the Prophets”). Similarly, Lamentations paradoxically calls her “princess of the provinces” (tAnydIM.B; ytir’f) in a passage indicting her for fornication (Lam 1:1–2), and Jeremiah calls her “great city” (hl’AdG>h; ry[il’] in a passage about her judgment (Jer 22:8).
- 21 See Caird, *Revelation*, 216; Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 395.
- 22 Virgil *Georgics* 2.535.
- 23 Horace *Carmen Saecularae* 7.
- 24 Cicero *ad Atticum* 6.5.
- 25 E.g., Mounce, *Revelation*, 315; Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, vol. 2 (New York: Newman, 1845), 325; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 203; Caird, *Revelation*, 216; Bauckham, *Climax*, 395.
- 26 See A. J. Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church’s Enemies* (New York: de Gruyter, 1987), 103.
- 27 Beale, *Revelation*, 868.
- 28 E.g. Isa 2:2; Jer 51:25; Dan 2:35, 45; Targ. Isa 41.15; et al.
- 29 So Beale, *Revelation*, 868–9; Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898), 431; J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming* (London: Unwin, 1887), 491–2.
- 30 E.g., R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1, *International Critical Commentary*, ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), lxxv, lxxxii–iii; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 967.

31 Bauckham, *Climax*, 39.

32 I owe this reference to Eric B. Sowell, who graciously pointed it out to me, having rightly recognized its great relevance to this thesis.

33 1 Enoch 25.3 (translation given is that of E. Isaac in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 26).

34 E.g. Caird, *Revelation*, 270; Ford, *Revelation*, 345; Beale, *Revelation*, 1065.

35 Cf. also 18.6; 32; 77.5.

36 Mounce actually does mention the seven mountains of 1 Enoch, but only in the context of the New Jerusalem. He makes no connection to 17:9 at all (Mounce, *Revelation*, 389).

37 4 Ezra 2.19.

38 Beale, *Revelation*, 1108; 4 Ezra of course is a later work, but this gives more attestation to the stock image of “seven mountains” in Jewish thought which may be influencing Rev 17:9.

39 Of course, the parallel is not perfect, since these other works are concerned primarily with Jerusalem in the eschaton. This may make the link less strong than it could be, but the correspondence of language cannot be dismissed. Furthermore, the preceding discussion of the Jewish tendency to speak of the holy city in the present through the eye of proleptic idealism mitigates this tension. Describing Jerusalem upon “seven mountains” (like Enoch and 4 Ezra) in the author’s own day would be consonant with the aforementioned portrayals as “princess of all nations” and “exultation of all the earth,” in which that which is ideal and theologically true is depicted as present reality.

40 These issues of course spill over into the fact that the seven mountains are also the seven heads of the beast. This can however be dealt with fairly naturally in that the imagery of the seven mountains represents the power base of the city, which, given the fact that the harlot is riding upon the beast, relates to the Roman authority that is empowering the city’s sin and persecution of the saints (see below, “False Jews and Idolatry”). The shared imagery of completeness of power behind both the seven mountains and the seven heads allows the two to be interchangeable for John. They represent the same thing, though viewed from different perspectives.

41 So Beale, *Revelation*, 887.

42 See especially Bauckham, *Climax*, chap. 10.

43 Iain Provan, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance: Revelation 18 From an Old Testament Perspective,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996), 81–100.

44 *Ibid.*, 86 (italics mine).

45 *Ibid.*

46 It should be noted that Provan does feel that the nature of the rhetoric of the passage points to greater trans-temporal powers behind Babylon that can rightly be applied in other contexts than historical Jerusalem; nevertheless, having surveyed all of the major emendations John has made, he summarizes what he considers to be the primary focus by stating, “The case for Babylon as Jerusalem, then, is in my view a compelling one” (Provan, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 96).

47 Cf. 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21.

48 The term *pneumatikw* has been translated quite literally here for the sake of interpretive neutrality. The RSV prefers “allegorically,” and the NET Bible reads “symbolically.” Bauer’s *Greek-English Lexicon* elaborates that the usage of the term

denotes “in keeping with the spirit with reference to the divine *pneu'ma*,” remarking specifically of this verse, “[I]f one follows the spiritual ... understanding of scripture ... , Jerusalem lies concealed beneath the name Sodom. Something more is involved here than mere allegory of figurative usage” (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, 3d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 837). The meaning may be more than “symbolically” or “allegorically;” it is certainly not less.

49 As with most “indisputable” issues, there has been the occasional voice of exception, most notably Mounce: “The majority of commentators take ‘the great city’ to be Jerusalem in spite of the fact that in the seven other references in Revelation it consistently refers to Rome ... In view of the consistent use of the term elsewhere in the book as a reference to Rome ... it is best to conclude that the witnesses meet their death at the hands of the Antichrist, whose universal dominion was in John’s day epitomized by the power of Rome ... The inclusion of a reference to the crucifixion is not to identify a geographical location but to illustrate the response of paganism to righteousness” (Mounce, *Revelation*, 220–21). In other words, Mounce’s conviction that the harlot in Rev 17–18 is Rome leads him to claim that the phrase “where also their Lord was crucified” refers not to Jerusalem, but to Rome, even though the original reader of the book would come across this passage first. How could this verse, as the first reference to “the great city,” not conjure up the image of Jerusalem for the audience? Are they expected to proleptically read Rome into it from a certain interpretation of chapters 17–18 (before reading them) against the connotations of the imagery? As Thomas remarks, “[I]f language has any meaning at all, it is hard to identify ‘the great city’ as anywhere else but Jerusalem” (Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 94; so Swete, *Apocalypse*, 138; Ford, *Revelation*, 292; et al.). This is especially true in light of the reference to “the holy city” (*thĒn povlin thĒn aJgivan*) just six verses earlier (11:2).

50 Ford, *Revelation*, 264.

51 So Russell, *Parousia*, 488; Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, 425; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 415. Moreover, v. 5 of this passage of Ezekiel is especially relevant for its strong statement against Jerusalem and its contrast of the city with other “nations,” the very sort of thing that may be happening here. I would note that I have found no other suggestion by any commentator for the background of the threefold splitting of the city. Often this detail is simply passed by without interpretation (cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 843–44; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 211; Caird, *Revelation*, 209); by some, it is merely set aside as “symbolical” (cf. Stuart, *Apocalypse*, vol. 2, 317, who employs this term with no further explanation).

52 One final note on 16:19: obviously, the “cities of the Gentiles” did not literally “fall” in A.D. 70, and this could be perceived as an obstacle to seeing Jerusalem here (though see Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 416). However, we are not arguing that a larger collapsing of apocalyptic/prophetic images is not at play in Revelation; it is certainly likely that the fall of Jerusalem, the fall of the Roman empire, the judgment, and the parousia are being telescoped as conflated events from the seer’s perspective. The present contention is merely that the underlying features of the text point to the idea that John is viewing Jerusalem as “the great city” here.

53 Cf. Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views, A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1997), 404.

- 54 See Russell, Parousia, 487.
- 55 Beale, Revelation, 886, citing Exod 25:3–7; 28:5–9, 28:15–20, 35:6; 36:9–12; 36:15–21 LXX.
- 56 So Chilton, Days of Vengeance, 429; Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 76.
- 57 Josephus The Jewish War 5.5.4 (translation given is that of Whiston in The Works of Josephus, trans. William Whiston [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987]).
- 58 So Terry, Biblical Apocalypics, 427; Russell, Parousia, 491; Chilton, Days of Vengeance, 424–428; et al. In Ford’s concise words, “It is the covenant which makes the bride, the breaking of it which makes the adulteress” (Ford, Revelation, 285).
- 59 Cf. Ezek 16:15, 17, 28, 35, 41; 23:1–21, 44; Isa 1:21; 57:3; Jer 2:20; 3:1; 13:27; Hos 2:2–5; 4:12, 15, 18; 5:4; 9:1; Mic 1:7.
- 60 Isa 23:15–18.
- 61 Nah 3:4–5; notably, in 4QpNah the Qumran community reapplies this passage to indict Jerusalem!
- 62 Chilton elaborates: “It is noteworthy that Tyre and Nineveh—the only two cities outside of Israel that are accused of harlotry—had both been in covenant with God. The kingdom of Tyre in David and Solomon’s time was converted to the worship of the true God, and her king contracted a covenant with Solomon and assisted in the building of the Temple (1 Kings 5:1–12; 9:13; Amos 1:9); Nineveh was converted under the ministry of Jonah (Jon 3:5–10). The later apostasy of these two cities could rightly be considered harlotry” (Chilton, Days of Vengeance, 424, n. 2). Even Beale recognizes this to be the likely explanation for these two exceptions: “Perhaps part of the reason that Tyre and Nineveh are the only two cities outside Israel referred to as harlots in the OT is that at one time they were in a covenant relationship with God and subsequently became faithless toward God by returning to idol worship ...” (Beale, Revelation, 850).
- 63 So Russell, Parousia, 489–90; Keith Mathison, Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999), 153; Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 74–75, who argues strongly that the imagery is being primarily taken from parallels in Jer 3, in which the subject is explicitly Yahweh sending the northern kingdom, Israel, away in divorce because of her harlotries, a theme which Gentry argues is also being picked up by John. Ford too sees the divorce theme at work in the book (Ford, Revelation, 93–94). Considering the contrasting of the judgment of the adulterous woman with the bringing in of the new bride for Christ, there might actually be some support for this.
- 64 See the comprehensive discussion in Ford, who also notes the persistent presence of the Jerusalem = harlot message in the Qumran scrolls, thoroughly examining the occurrences of this phenomenon and arguing heavily from the consistency of this evidence (Ford, Revelation, 283–85).
- 65 See Chilton, Days of Vengeance, 20–25; also, Beagley, “The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse,” 93; Beale notes widespread “agreement” that Ezekiel is the greatest influence on the book (though he himself prefers to emphasize Daniel) (Beale, Revelation, 77); Carrington is even willing to say (with some degree of hyperbole), “The Revelation is a Christian rewriting of Ezekiel” (Philip Carrington, The Meaning of the Revelation [New York: Macmillan, 1931], 65).
- 66 Isa 40:2; 61:7 Jer 16:18; 17:18; cf. Beagley, The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse, 98; Provan, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 94.
- 67 Again, this text occurs in the passage Gentry argues is the primary backdrop for Rev 17 and 18 (see above, n. 61).
- 68 Beale, Revelation, 886.
- 69 A survey of the commentaries on this verse revealed no other suggestions for an Old Testament source. It is of course not the case that all elements of the book must be related to OT allusions, but as any student of the book well knows, the vast majority of the imagery is a recapitulation of previous prophetic material, and if there are text(s) that appear as though they may be in the background of John’s thought, we are typically on safe ground in supposing some degree of OT reliance.
- 70 So Mounce, Revelation, 311; Charles, Revelation, 2:65; Bauckham, Climax, 344; Morris, Revelation, 200; et al.
- 71 Cf. Beale: “... the validity of the references attesting this [is] doubtful ...” (Beale, Revelation, 858); see also the more thorough inquiry by Beagley, The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse, 102.
- 72 Beagley, The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse, 102.
- 73 Beale, Revelation, 885.
- 74 Ibid., 886; however, Gentry notes the following passage from Josephus, who writes, “It seems to me to be necessary here to give an account of all the honors that the Romans and their emperors paid to our nation, and of the leagues of mutual assistance they have made with it” (Josephus Antiquities 14.10.1–2 [translation given is that of Whiston in Works of Josephus (italics added)]); cf. discussion in Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 78.
- 75 Beale, Revelation, 223–28.
- 76 Ibid., 227–28.
- 77 Cf. especially 2:14, 20.
- 78 So Caird, Revelation, 38–45; Mounce, Revelation, 81, 87; Beale, Revelation, 261.
- 79 Cf. Caird, Revelation, 38.
- 80 See Beale’s discussion, Revelation, 251.
- 81 In fact, there are several clear literary parallels that tighten the link between Jezebel in Rev 2 and the subsequent harlot, Babylon. For this, see Beale, Revelation, 262.
- 82 Of course the sophistication referred to here is that of form, structure, and imagery, not grammar or syntax, two areas in which Revelation is certainly notoriously less than refined.
- 83 2:9; 3:9.
- 84 In addition, this rejection of the arrival of her husband, the Messiah, fits perfectly with the idea of her destruction making way for Christ’s true bride, the “New” Jerusalem (chap. 21). They reject Him in idolatry/adultery, so He takes a new bride. For more development of this theme, see “New Jerusalem/Old Jerusalem (or The Bride Versus the Harlot)” below.
- 85 Ibid., 82–84.
- 86 Ibid., 84.
- 87 Ibid., 86.
- 88 Ibid., 88.
- 89 From this perspective, there is structural justification for use of the Tyre allusions (the Tyre lament from Ezekiel is an adaptable, prime example of a lament dirge) and thematic justification for the Babylon allusions (the entire context being the depiction of the great city as “Babylon”), but the constant interweaving of Israel/Jerusalem allusions (cf. Provan, “Fouls Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 87–95) must be accounted for—if John is portraying Jerusalem as the lamented Babylon, there is an excellent coherence to such a maneuver.
- 90 Beagley, The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse, 108; Also,

Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, trans. J. E. Alsup, *Continental Commentaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 206, who writes, “Rome was neither a port city nor a shipping center. But here John hardly intended to copy precisely the real situation; rather he wanted to round off the scene of lament by means of a third group, and for that purpose he used the material that Ezek 27:29–33 provided him.”

Moreover, Provan argues that the economic problem should probably not be seen as the ultimate cause for the critique anyway, but rather as a manifestation (even in the original OT context) of the problem of idolatry. This he sees as the real sin under critique: “One could certainly not deduce from [the contents of the cargo list] in Revelation 18 that we are dealing here with specific criticism of Rome’s economics, rather than with the sort of general criticism that world-powers receive in the Bible as a whole. That general criticism is much more about religion than it is about economics; or to put it another way, economic sins are only ever a function of idolatry, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, and it is on the idolatry that the emphasis falls, rather than upon the economics” (Provan, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 88). Regarding idolatry, see above, “False Jews and Idolatry.”

91 Provan, “Fouls Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 87–95; so Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 95–96; Ford, *Revelation*, 300–307.

92 Provan, “Fouls Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 88.

93 *Ibid.*, 94.

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Ibid.*, 95. Provan suggests at least six such allusions; cf. Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 95–100 for a number of other examples of alterations in this lament passage that may point to Jerusalem.

96 Wright suggests a number of OT texts that are apparently influential here, including Isa 13:6, 9–11, 19; Isa 14:4, 12–15; Isa 48:20; 52:11–12; Jer 50:6, 8, 28; 51:6–10, 45–6, 50–51, 57 (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2, *Christian Origins and the Question of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 354–60). Certainly, other texts are recalled in the passage including famine warnings (Isa 5:13–14;), earthquake predictions (Hag 2:6–7), and descriptions of cosmic disturbances (Isa 13:9–10; 24:18–20; Joel 2:1, 30–31). The claim here is not that only Babylon language is used by Jesus, but simply that such is a key image in the discourse. If we have here an instance of Christ applying anti-Babylon texts to Jerusalem, then an important precedent is established for such a rhetorical device before Revelation, even if other stock images reflected in the Olivet Discourse are at John’s disposal as well.

97 Most notably Jer 50:8; 51:6, 9, 45; cf. Rev 18:14.

98 Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 97.

99 Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 359.

100 *Ibid.*, 356, n. 137; 360 (italics mine); cf. the references to “those who say they are Jews and are not” in Rev 2:9; 3:9.

101 This presupposes apostolic authorship, but such a presupposition does not make or break the argument. Regardless of who wrote Revelation, the Olivet Discourse tradition would certainly have been well known to whomever it was, and other parallels between the two make clear that such was the case (see n. 102, below).

102 E. g., Robert Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992), 53; C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines Jr., *Doomsday Delusions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 37–44; and Gentry, “A

Preterist View of Revelation,” 52–53.

103 Also, 16:6; 17:6; again, we are not necessarily claiming literary dependence on the gospels, merely dependence on Jesus’ teaching tradition, which clearly seems to be reflected in the Apocalypse at a number of points (see above, n.102).

104 Italics mine; so Swete, *Apocalypse*, 241; Morris, *Revelation*, 217; Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ*, trans. and ed. Francis J. Moloney (Wilmington, DE: Gazier, 1983), 338; Beale, *Revelation*, 923.

105 Italics mine; so Caird, *Revelation*, 231; Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 76.

106 Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 75; So Ford, *Revelation*, 300; Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 94–95; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 466. The identification here of the prophets as Old Testament prophets is of course specifically related to the warnings of Christ rather than the Revelation text—the Apocalypse does not technically declare which prophets are in view, but this may be hairsplitting; if we do have tradition dependence, a corresponding inference seems justified.

107 See above, “Rome.” This near-universal understanding in fact leads proponents of the Rome = Babylon to statements such as, “The two figures of monster and woman are really alternative representations of a single entity” (G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, *New Century Bible Commentary* [London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1974], 249). Theologically this might work, but the events of this passage make a double Roman referent more than a little precarious. This problem is heightened by the fact that the beast is reserved for separate punishment in chapter 19, long after the harlot has already been destroyed. It seems quite clear that John is intending us to understand a distinction between the two characters.

108 Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 92 (italics mine).

109 Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, rev. ed. (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1998), 71.

110 As well as Christ’s warning to the Jewish leadership, “Behold, your house is left to you desolate!” (Matt 23:38; italics added)

111 Beale, *Revelation*, 883.

112 Another possible indication of this connection is the fact, as noted by Ford, that the normal OT sentence for adultery was stoning—only the daughter of a priest was to be burned (Ford, *Revelation*, 292; also Carrington, *Meaning of the Revelation*, 287).

113 William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: Armstrong, 1903), 68.

114 So Gregg, *Revelation*, 404.

115 This is clearly shown by Gentry’s chart on page 78 in “A Preterist View of Revelation;” so Beale, *Revelation*, 1063–65; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 283–84; Mounce, *Revelation*, 388–89; et al.

116 So Russell, *Parousia*, 485–86; Carrington, *Meaning of the Revelation*, 276; Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, 460; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 422; Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 87. It should be noted that this is not necessarily to claim a complete “replacement” of “Israel,” but certainly to claim a replacement of Jerusalem.

Incidentally, this contrast of “Old Jerusalem” and “New Jerusalem” obviously carries striking echoes of Paul’s “present Jerusalem” / “Jerusalem above” language in Gal 4—certainly not an insignificant parallel.

