

## Revelation 16-22 Deciphering Four Final Images

One key note in understanding revelation is this:

This is a collage of images, not one long narrative.

It is not a sequence of events but a pastiche of different events and images,

Not a schedule or road map to what happens first, second and third.

They work together as one overwhelming impression in conjunction of the power and reign of Christ.

### Seven Bowls (Rev 16)

They are a part of a throne-room scene.

It is accounting of all the world - of all people.



They are the bowls of God's wrath being poured out.

In other words, the unjust will be justly dealt with.

Sin does not go unpunished.

And here we are talking not of ignorance, but real willful wickedness.

Ever wonder what the consequences of real evil are?

Ever wonder if God will ever bring justice?

This image is a guarantee of justice that should silence those who complain.

There are four lessons that Darrel Johnson identifies here:

1 - Judgment is Horrible - It is a terrible and terrifying reality.

If you have ever thought someone deserved judgment,

Your reaction to the execution of true judgment should so blanch you

That you pity the person who must face it.

This is not the wiping out of 1/3 of the stars or sea or population.

This is complete and total destruction.

In your anger and thirst for justice you may see red.

But total and complete judgment is absolutely and completely sobering.

Jesus, who is the person who describes hell the most,

speaks in this manner of judgment in the gospels.

2 - Judgment is Justified.

God is not arbitrary nor cruel.

It is absolutely deserved and earned.

And despite its horror, all who see will understand that it is just.

3 - Judgment Occurs only after the Chance for Repentance.

There is always a heads up the trumpets are a call, a warning.

But those warnings can be ignored and dismissed.

A messenger can be sent, a missionary, a dream, even conscience.

But that time of grace will pass.

We are not talking merely of individual situations but of entire cultures, nations, regimes and institutions.

We live in that time of grace which is why justice may seem slow.

But frankly, if God were faster, I know I would not be here today nor would you.

This only makes the importance of our mission as the church so much clearer.

We are the messengers of grace who run before hell itself.

4 - Judgment fits the Crime

When grace and repentance are ignored,  
the full punishment that fits the sin is executed.

No more, no less.

5 - Judgment is Fair.

It is just.

It is a righteous judgment not based on hearsay.

There are not "wrong convictions" for God who know all things.

God's judgment is a serious thing.

If not for mercy, it falls on all of us.

For God to be good he must also be just.

I am glad his goodness also means he is merciful and gracious.

No one who receives judgment will find it unfair.

They will know exactly why and what they have done.

And all will know that God is good and just.

### **Babylon (Rev 17-19)**

Rev 17:1-6

*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."*

*Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. The name written on her forehead was a mystery:*

*babylon the great  
    the mother of prostitutes  
    and of the abominations of the earth.*

*I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.*

Images of Babylon



Matthias Gerung, The Whore of Babylon, 1532



Durer, The Whore of Babylon, 1498



20th Century Rendition

The word Babylon is based on Babel



Pieter Brueghel the Elder, The Tower of Babel, c.1563-1565

Babel & Babylon are representative of all human hubris - pride.  
It represented specifically Rome, but bears the name of more ancient empires.  
Rome is the city of seven hills - they even had an annual festival called septimontivan.  
But there were other beasts or kingdoms - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece  
Rome is the 6th beast.  
But truly they are the empires and ambitions of the world.  
We have not stopped building towers.



Eiffel Tower



The Empire State Building



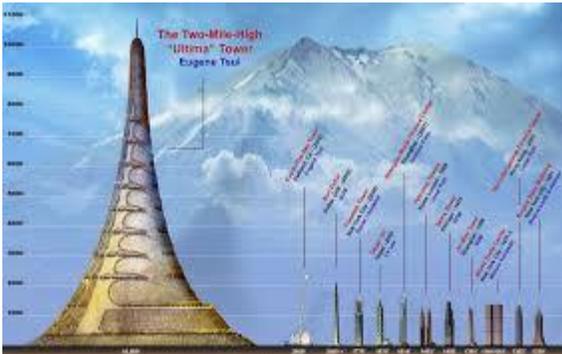
Seattle Space Needle



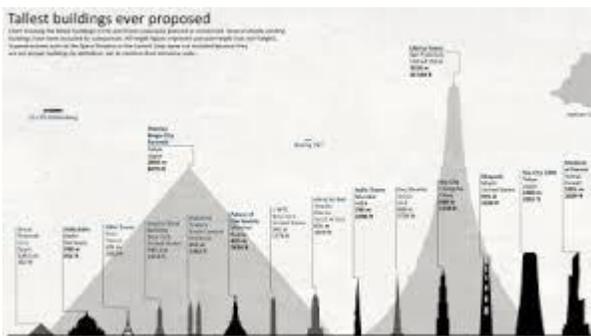
The Oriental Pearl Tower



The CN Tower



Concept Mega Tower



How high can we go?

But really, this isn't about towers and architecture.

Babylon represents how the Dragon, Satan, influences the world.

There are Seven Attributes to Babylon:

1. Godless - A way of life that denies or ignores God.  
 How often do we think of God?  
 Is he really the centre of our lives or are we playing Christian?
2. Immoral Sensuality - Life without relational faithfulness - using bodies.  
 Pornography, Prostitution, Human trafficking  
 Do we use or view the bodies of other men and women as mere objects?  
 This includes the way we value our own bodies and body image.
3. Injustice - Material gain is valued above people.  
 We treat people as commodities, as chattel to be bought sold and exploited.  
 We do not give thought to the consequences of our economic practices.  
 I learned this past week that in the province of SK,  
 97% of women inmates are First Nations people.  
 Not only have past injustices led to this reality, but on top of this,  
 Our penal system stopped recording the ethnic origins of inmates  
 in order to hide this from researchers.  
 No records = no evidence.
4. Consumerism - Value and worth and the good is based on production and money.  
 The progression of devaluing people means we value things.  
 We live by envy, the insatiable desire for more.  
 We not longer are just looking at basic needs, we become addicted to getting.  
 There is a reason why tithing and almsgiving are spiritual practices.

Giving helps stave off our greed.

Takes the focus off ourselves.

In the news we discovered that in a single month 13 million dollars were laundered through the River Rock casino.

It has taken a year for this to come to light.

5. Violence - War and weapons as the instinctual reaction to everything.

And when we do not get the respect, the things we want, we threaten and wage war.

The conversation at the UN is but a taste of this sabre rattling this past week.

Or even the road rage incidents this past week.

6. Deception - Falsehood, lies, become a way of life.

Again, we have seen politicians do this continuously and perhaps even more so this season.

But this is not restricted to the halls of power.

We are talking about classrooms, workplaces and homes as well.

What are we hiding?

7. Idolatry - the setting up of false gods and values - turning from the true God.

But this is what is expected of a godless society.

We all worship something - value something.

Placing ourselves in the place of God or material things is idolatry.

Telling ourselves that God condones our greed is blasphemy and idolatry.

The beast & Babylon wages war against God's people, the church and causes it suffering.

In the end, Babylon is destroyed, not by God, but by the beast itself.

You see, it is the very nature of evil to turn on itself.

This is why the Sith have the rule of 2!

This is borrowed from the nature of evil in Scripture.

Evil, in the end does not play well with others after using others.

God's people will be freed from the power and oppression of Babylon. (Rev 18)

It is like another exodus and they will worship God on his throne. (Rev 19)

The Beast is overthrown and thrown into the lake of fire.

### **Millennium (Rev 20)**

A new image is now introduced.

Rev 20:1-6

*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*

*I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

There has been a lot of argument about the millennium that has occurred in the past 100 years.

Historically, the church had very little problems with these factions because the church generally understood the use of allegory.

The rise of literalism at the end of the 19th century and well into other 20th has truly been unhelpful.

And so, although I will explain, the terms pre-mil, post-mil, a-mil and pre and post trib

Know that this is a storm in a teacup that doesn't matter.

If you encounter a brother or sister (yes I still call them that) who makes a big deal

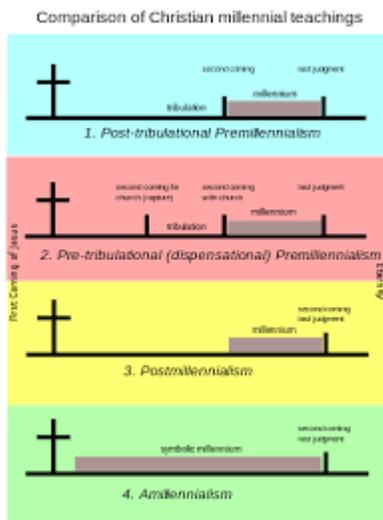
of these things, just be kind but have the wherewithal to disagree or ask their reasoning.

Frankly, there is only one passage in the entire Bible that speaks of the millenium and this is it.

As always, my rule of thumb is to never form a theology from just one verse or even a few verses.

Theological ideas must have Biblical attestation and consistency.

So here we go:



What position should we hold?

Simple: Jesus is coming back and he reigns in the past, present and future.

How it all happens? Well, just wait and see.

In the meantime, be watchful!

Again, the beast is overthrown and thrown into the lake of fire.

### **The Bride City (Rev 21:9-27)**

*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

*The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.*

*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

You may not have noticed, but this is a description of the bride, the wife of the lamb.

This is the beloved of Jesus.

And the beloved of Jesus is - get this - a city.  
What?

Not only that it is a city that has the dimensions of a perfect cube.



A Borg Cube

No, Jesus is not marrying a Borg cube!

So who gets married to a city???

That is bonkers!

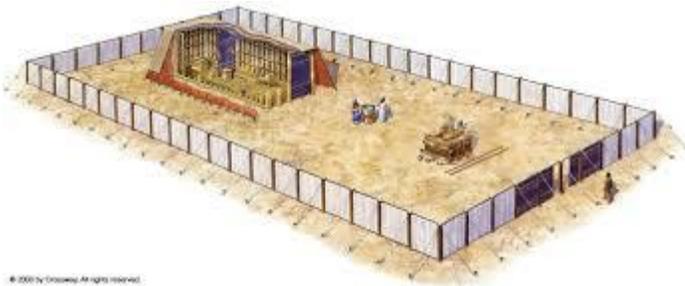
John's readers would recognize the very clear and stark understanding  
of what he was writing.

I think we have talked enough to know what that might be.

There is only one clue that may elude us as modern readers that has not yet been mentioned.

The idea of a perfect cube occurs elsewhere in the Bible.

Let me show you.

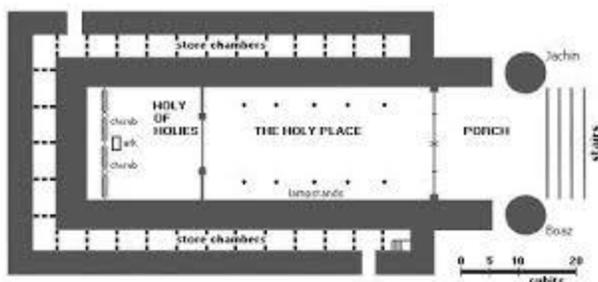


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Tabernacle



Solomon's Temple



The Floor plan of Solomon's Temple

The Holy of Holies

The place where God dwells among his people  
Is described as a perfect cube.

Discussion:

Can you decipher the bride city of Christ?

You are.

The entire descriptions is replete with 12's.

The 12 tribes and the 12 apostles.

This is the people of God.

12000 x 12000 x 12000

12 x (3x10) three times.

Beautiful - adorned with precious stones, paves with gold,

Ultimate value, ultimate beauty.

God resides at the very heart of his bride, his city, his people.

How do you see yourself?

Christ loves you more than you love yourself!

When he sees you he sees more!

God and his people are joined as one

as husband and wife

divine union.

It is what was intended from creation.

Eternal Union with God.



**Come (Rev 22:16-17)**

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."*

*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*