

Babylon here stands for Rome. Remember 11:4, the city which is symbolically Sodom and Egypt and the site of the crucifixion. Rome seems to be every place of evil drawn together. Note that the monster is back.

Wine is a symbol of destruction . (See 14:8 and 14:10 - don't think of a pleasant tittle, think of being drunk to oblivion.) Grape juice / wine was considered to be the blood of the fruit. Think of the Last Supper.

The word 'wrath, 'often translated as 'anger' means extreme agitation. It tells us of God's emotional reaction to what is happening . specifically what the Roman Empire is doing. The word 'winepress' speaks of God preparing to pour out his wrath. The wine will be harvested and poured out on the world.

The harvest - see if you can get this - is the death of the martyrs. This isn't the final judgement but it is the firstfruits.

Rome appears to rule the world, but God is going to act.

How on earth is the world going to drink the wine/blood of the martyrs? We must read on, but you may already be thinking of the Communion Service. As verse 20 says, this is going to be huge.

Going back to verse 6, this is a gospel. The word was used to announce the day an emperor came to the throne. This is about King Jesus. This is about the downfall of Rome and the downfall of all evil empires.

Let's close by looking at verse 7. The creator God will have his day. Remember chapter 4, especially verse 11.

Revelation 12 to 14 the monsters

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Chapter 12 - the dragon

These chapters contain so many symbols that it is hard to keep up. I'm going to start with 12:11 where the language is plain. The martyrs defeat the devil by being faithful to Jesus all the way to their deaths. They win in the same way that Jesus did. That's worth a long thought.

Chapter 12 tells us that these martyrs win a great spiritual victory. Let's look at the main characters in this chapter.

1. The woman represents the people of God, not just Mary the mother of Jesus. Note the splendour with which she is portrayed.
2. The male child. Spot the reference to Psalm 2 in verse 5, and the reference to the ascension. Jesus.
3. The woman's other children - the faithful followers of Jesus, who continue his work.
4. The dragon / serpent / devil (slanderer) / Satan (enemy) / accuser. When the martyrs are faithful he has nothing to say and loses his place in heaven.
5. The creation - almost a character in its own right, Made by God and still fulfilling God's purpose.

The first monster - chapter 13:1-10

Again, let's start with the verse that talks in plain language., verse 10. These verses are there to call God's people to endurance and faith.

These verses rework Daniel 7, a chapter often referenced by Jesus with his preferred title of Son of Man. In this chapter, four monsters symbolise four empires who wreak havoc on the earth until God intervenes and one like a son of man takes the throne. Here the four monsters come together as one. John is writing about Rome, where emperors call themselves son of God and demand worship.

This monster in some ways resembles Jesus - note that it looks as if it has been slain (I've no idea why my translation uses the word 'wound'.) and note the authority given to it. The Roman Empire had come near to collapse but it was back with a vengeance. Remember Jesus' warning about wolves in sheep's clothing.

The sea is a symbol for the source of all evil. State sponsored persecution is coming.

The second monster - chapter 13:11-18

Let's start with the reference to 666. Hebrew numbers were taken from letters of the alphabet (imagine A=1, B=2 etc.) You could give someone a number by adding together the numbers of their name. 666 could be the Hebrew language number or Nero Cesar the Roman Emperor. 666 falls one short (three times) of the complete 7.

The second monster looks partly like a lamb but its character is nothing like Jesus. The Empire was building temples to Rome and insisting you offered sacrifices before you could trade in the market. This was huge trouble ahead for the followers of Jesus.

The people of God: chapter 14:1-5

We are now back with the 144,000 the people of God. In everything their praises are deafening. They follow Jesus (the Lamb), but also the Good Shepherd) wherever he goes. They will win the victory in the same way that he won. They are the conquerors.

These people are symbolised as virgins. They are waiting for their ultimate union with Jesus and they stay faithful on the way. (See 2 Corinthians 11:2 and remember Mary the mother of Jesus.) Note the reference to Mount Zion - we are still in Psalm 2.

They are described as 'firstfruits.' John is looking for a great harvest. Let's read on ...

The wrath of God chapter 14:6-20

Again, let's start at the bit where the language is plain, verses 12, 13 and 14. This section is a call for patient endurance. (So is the whole of Revelation.) Endurance will not be in vain.