

Revelation's exposé of two cities

Imperial Rome's reign of greed vs. New Jerusalem's reign of justice

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At the close of John's Revelation, we are presented with a tableau of two contrasting cities, unveiled as two rival political economies between which the readers must choose. The following chart is designed as a guide for exploration and reflection.

"Babylon, the great (powerful) city, that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:5, 18)	"New Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2; 21:2, 10)
preview texts: 14:8; 16:19 main text: 17:1–18; 18:1–19:5	preview texts: 3:12 (2:7, 26–28; 3:5, 21); 19:7–8 main text: 21:1–22:5; concluding ref.: 22:14–15, 17, 19
formal introduction: 17:1 "Come, I will show you. . . ."	formal introduction: 21:9 "Come, I will show you. . . ."
origins from the underworld, and from the "sea" (11:7; 13:1–4; 17:3)	origins from heaven, becoming a terrestrial reality (3:12; 21:2, 10) [cf. Matt. 6:10: "come on earth"]
pictured and personified as luxuriously and seductively dressed prostitute (17:3–5; 18:16) [a parody of the goddess Roma]	pictured and personified as bride adorned for marriage (19:7–8; 21:2)
character and lifestyle **images of luxurious excess, extreme arrogance, insatiable craving (18:7, 9, 14–15, 17, 19)	character and lifestyle **images of virtue and fidelity (19:8)
wealth **extravagant apparel; has "shiny" glitz and "brilliant" luxuries (17:3–5; 18:14, 16) **center of world trade in luxury goods (18:11–19)	wealth **described in terms of physical features of the city (21:11–21) main street: pure gold, transparent as glass (21:21)

<p>geopolitics and economy **pictured as oppressive, imperial capital city, with an extractive tributary economy based on military conquest, earth's destruction, economic exploitation, and inequitable trading relationships **its global traders are the magnates of the earth **marked by the slave trade **operates by seduction, deception, and corruption (11:18; 14:8; 17:1–6, 9, 15, 18:3, 7, 9, 11–19, 23–24; 19:2)</p>	<p>geopolitics and economy **pictured as God's alternative, international capital city, with an invitational, attractational tributary economy, with free access to its resources) **the production of its river and tree of life focuses on the "healing of the nations" **free access and unlimited, renewal supply of the necessities of pure water, food, medicine (21:6, 12, 22–26; 22:1–2, 17)</p>
<p>residents (18:2) **those who declare allegiance to the imperial regime (13:4, 8) exclusions: 13:16–17</p>	<p>residents (21:3; 22:3–5) **servants of God and the Lamb are really "coregents" (22:4–5; cf. 1:6, 9; 2:10, 26–28; 3:20–21; 5:10; 20:4–6) inclusions: 21:7, 27; 22:14; cf. 2:7–3:21 exclusions: 21:8, 27a; 22:3, 15, 19</p>
<p>doom, judgment (16:19; 17:3, 16–17; 18:1–24; cf. 11:15–18; 14:17–20; 16:4–16) darkness (16:10; 18:14)</p>	<p>vindication (19:2 [cf. 6:9–11]; 22:7, 10, 12, 20) light (21:11, 23, 24; 22:5; cf. 15:6; 19:8; 22:1, 16)</p>
<p>no more luxuries, sounds of culture (18:14, 22–23) cf. satirical picture of weeping and wailing, for loss of wealth 18:9–19</p>	<p>no more sea; death, mourning, crying, pain; temple; sun or moon; shut gates; things accursed; night; need for sun or lamp; winter (21:1, 4, 22, 23, 25; 22:2–3, 5)</p>
<p>call to the church: exodus (18:4) "Come out. . ." [What kind of exodus is this?]</p>	<p>call to the church: invitation to participate (22:17; cf. 19:7–9; 21:17; 22:19–20) "Come!"</p>