

Painting With Flesh and Blood

Revelation 17

October 28, 2001

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A few weeks ago at the Living Stone Service Marcia Hinds stood up and shared a vision—a picture—that she received during the worship service. She said, “The calling upon Lookout Mountain is to express the creativity in our hearts.”

A few days after that I was surprised to find out that our speaker for the church retreat, McNair Wilson, was speaking on this topic: “Recapturing Your Creative Spirit: Finding Our Place in God’s Plan.” This past weekend many of you were there as McNair shared insights into being a creative person.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and as the final act of creation He said, “Let us make man in our own image and likeness.” Many theologians argue that the image of God is to be a creator, as He is a creator.

Well, Marcia described her vision at the Living Stone Service. I love it when folks get visions and not only words, because it’s obvious the vision is more than they know. I think it must have been like that with John in The Revelation. Scholars wonder at John’s skill and artistry in crafting The Revelation, but John didn’t paint the picture. The *Lamb* painted the picture, and John just described it.

Marcia described this enormous canvas. It’s opening scene on one side displayed the words “In the beginning God created.” The ending scene was the New Jerusalem. In the middle, where she expected to see the cross, was the Lamb upon His throne. Throughout the canvas were pictures that depicted the lives of God’s people.

I’ve been chewing on that picture (perhaps a scroll), thinking about the beginning and the end. We’re studying the end in The Revelation. From here on out, the end is dominated by two women separated by the Lamb and one thousand years of His reign.

The two women are the Great Harlot (the Whore of Babylon) and the Bride (the New Jerusalem). The New Jerusalem is the end. Does the end have anything to do with the beginning?

Paul writes, “God accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.” That means that the end *must* have something to do with the beginning. And *your* life is not Plan B, because there *is* no Plan B. It’s all Plan A, and you must be an integral part of the whole story.

Genesis is about you,
Revelation is about you.

“And everything that was written in the past was written to teach us” (Romans 15).

For we are the Israel of God,
Children of Abraham by faith,
True Jews circumcised in heart,
The temple of the Living God,
The Bride of Christ,
The New Jerusalem coming down.

So it's not like this American Pop Theology of the last hundred years that makes the Church a parenthesis in God's plan for the geo-political state of Israel. The Church is not a parenthesis in another plan. The Church is the crowning pinnacle of God's creation. Paul said, “For [God] made Christ head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). The end has everything to do with the beginning and with *you* right now.

In the beginning (Genesis 1-2:3) God creates *everything* in six days. The last thing created (the pinnacle of creation, God's dream of creation) was man “in His image.” Then God rests on the seventh day, because all creation is finished.

We modern people tend to read that story simply as “seven days” long ago. But there's a huge problem with that: God is still creating. He's not finished. Paul even said in I Corinthians 15 that we're still being made into His image, the image of Christ (the second Adam). We're still being made into the kind of creator that Christ is. Remember, Christ called from His cross, “It is finished.” Did God say, “Excuse me . . . *actually* it was finished back there on the seventh day”?

In Hebrews we read that God rested on the seventh day, but we are called to enter His rest *now*. So . . .

Did Christ enter God's rest at the cross?
Did Christ finish God's creating on His cross?

Are we finally perfected in His image through the cross, not just at a point in time, but when we carry His cross each day?

If so, it means we're still living in the sixth day, still being made into the image of God. And then those seven days of Genesis cover all of time, the whole canvas.

Seven churches
 Seven days
 Seven seals
 Seven bowls
 Seven trumpets
 Seven thunders
 Seven eyes of the Lamb

Seven heads of the Beast . . .

That's more than just counting. It's saying, "These are the days of time, the days in which we live."

We're being painted in time,
but the canvas is finished in eternity.

So we have been made and are being made in His image.

Now, you may say, "Seven days is *seven days*, and I take the Bible *literally!*" (Sometimes I think that means we take the Bible *scientifically* rather than *spiritually*, by sight rather than by faith.)

Well . . . how long is seven days? Are you traveling at the speed of light? Where are you standing?

Gerald Schroeder, a physicist from MIT, decided to calculate the age of the universe from the point of the Big Bang, because modern science has demonstrated that time is relative to changes in gravity and velocity. So calculating the mass of the universe and the rate of expansion, Schroeder's figures indicated that from the earth looking back at creation, the universe would appear to be 15 3/4 billion years old. However, from creation—the beginning—looking out at the earth, the universe would appear to be not quite . . . seven days old. We are living in the sixth day, still being made in God's image.

Well, Genesis 1-2:3 describes the seven days and God's dream of creation: "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." But then in Genesis 2:4 the author goes back to Day Six. He begins to describe how God made man. I believe the rest of the Bible is Day Six until some women go to a tomb early one Sunday morning and the stone is rolled away and Easter—eternity—Day Seven—begins to invade history.

But Day Seven, Heaven, never fully invades all space and time until the end of The Revelation when the people of God say, "Come, Lord Jesus," and He says, "As you wish." It's the consummated, finished kingdom of God, for His Bride is ready—finished—fully created. It's the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

How *is* the Bride made ready?

In Genesis 2 God makes the Garden, and God says, "Eat not of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The day you eat of it you will die." Then God sees the first thing which he pronounces "not good." In the words of Milton, that thing is *loneliness*. He said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper fit (suitable) for him."

A helper. Who is your helper, Christian?

Then He brought to Adam every beast and every bird. They're each male and female (I would imagine) . . . each has a partner, each has a likeness, each has a helper through whom more life will be created. Animals are created after their kind. But Adam is alone. It's like God asks:

“Who’s your helper, Adam?”
“In whose likeness are you, Adam?”
“Who will create through you, Adam?”
“To whom will you cleave, Adam?”
“As you wish, Adam.”

“But Adam did not find a helper suitable for him.” (Now, this is a deep mystery, but how could he find his helper? He did not yet know good and evil, and his helper is The Good.)

So God begins the great lesson. He puts Adam to sleep, and He takes a rib from his side and fashions it into Eve. Women, don't be offended, for you *were* Adam, and he was you. Up to this point Adam was a “He-She.” So far, when I've said, “Adam,” I was talking about you too, women. Together, male and female, we are in the image of God. Adam was a “He-She.”

So when Adam sees Eve he says, “Hey! That’s my rib! Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She is me!” And she really was.

The helper Adam got was more of himself. And the helper Eve got was more of herself. In Ephesians Paul writes that this male-female thing in Genesis 2 is a picture, a lesson, about something else.

You see, the helper Adam picks is more of himself. And some help *she* turns out to be! The first thing she does is help him find some fruit. She talks to a snake. But both Adam and Eve are present, and not only is Eve a lousy helper for Adam, but Adam is a lousy helper for Eve.

Adam is Eve,
Eve is Adam,
and we're just not good at helping ourselves.

The snake says, “Hey, this fruit will make you like God, knowing good and evil.” The thing is, it *does*. For God even says, “Behold, they have become like us knowing good and evil.” Isn't that God's dream? His likeness? Yet Adam and Eve sinned.

They are kicked out of the Garden, sentenced to death, and they find themselves alone. They sinned. How did they sin? Wasn't it God's dream of creation to create them in His likeness? Yes, it was God's dream, but they tried to create *themselves* without help. If God wanted them to know good and evil (like Him), perhaps He would have given them that fruit another way. (I don't know; it's a mystery.) But independent of God they took the fruit and consumed the fruit.

Not just *like* God . . . they tried to *be* God.

More than God, they wanted God's stuff . . . consumers.

More than His *self*—His *heart*—they wanted His attributes.

Instead of trusting God to create them in His image, they trusted themselves to create themselves in His image.

Instead of trusting their helper, they trusted themselves and they trusted a snake.

Instead of a bride, humanity had become a whore . . . a consumer rather than a creator.

But that was *still Day Six*;
and God will *still* have His dream.

And God *still* “accomplishes all things
according to the counsel of His will.”

And God was *still* making man in His image,
according to plan.

And God is *still* asking,
“Who's your helper?”

The next time that word “helper” appears in my English Bible is a few thousand years later. A desperate man named David (hardly a model citizen, but a royal catastrophe) wrote, “Oh Lord, be my helper.” And God called him a man after His own heart.

A thousand years later another man, a son of David and the Son of God (Jesus, who referred to Himself as the “parakletos”—the “helper”) said, “I am going, but I will send you another helper. You already know Him, for He is with you and will be in you.”

Jesus referred to us as His Bride saying, “Apart from me you can do nothing. But abide in me and I in you and so bear much fruit.” That is, create *much fruit*—God's dream of creation, His Bride, man in His own image and likeness.

Revelation 17:1:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."

And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her I marveled greatly. But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while.

As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.

And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast; they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth."

There is a *whole lot* in that chapter, but did you notice Satan's kingdom consumes itself? The Beast consumes the Harlot—a consumer kingdom.

In verse 14, those with Christ conquer the Beast! Remember — that was the huge question at the start of the book: “Who will conquer? Who will eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God? Who will not be hurt by the second death? Who receives the morning star and will be clad in white garments? Who will be the temple, the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God? Who will sit with Christ on His throne? Who will *conquer?*” Here’s the answer: *Those with Christ . . .* for He is their helper.

We’ve already preached on the Beast. But now John is “amazed” at the Harlot. The word can even mean “attracted.” It’s clear the Harlot is evil yet attractive. (That’s how harlots are.) She loves men for their attributes but not for themselves. She loves men as food to consume. The Beast exercises power over men through intimidation. The Harlot exercises power over men through seduction. In the next chapter we find God’s people have been seduced.

People argue forever about who exactly the Whore is . . .

In verse 5 she’s **Babylon**.

In verse 9 she sits on seven mountains like **Rome**. In verse 18 she *is* (as John writes) the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth. (She’s *at least* Rome and Babylon.)

In verse 6 she’s drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs. That best fits **Jerusalem**. (Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D., utterly destroyed by the Roman Beast, as Jesus prophesied.) It’s clear this woman is the antithesis of the New Jerusalem, so maybe this is the Old Jerusalem. Remember, it was the Old Jerusalem that killed Jesus. They had a dream of Messiah who would liberate the geo-political entity of Israel from the dominion of Rome. And when He did not do that, they killed him. They wanted an independent Jewish State. They wanted the blessings of God, not the *person* of God. So when the *person* of God showed up, they killed Him.

Amazingly, some Christians are all worried about blessing the state of Israel so they can be blessed. That sounds like harlotry and the spirit that got Jesus crucified. In Jesus’ day Jerusalem was infected with consumer religion. So Jesus went into the temple and drove out the merchants and moneychangers in an absolute fury, like a man who has found another man in his wife’s bed. He said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.” And He *did*. I’m looking at it.

Harlotry is the pinnacle of consumerism. It’s buying and selling life—consuming life. When you pay for a person, you make them worth a finite amount, something you can pay. You make them part of your own portfolio, your own kingdom. But then everything in your kingdom is less than you . . . dead . . . and you’re alone. That’s the end of consumerism.

If you consume everything, purchase everything, own everything, everything is dead. You can pay for idols, but do you think you can *acquire God*? Acquire the blessings of

God, the attributes of God, like plucking fruit from a tree? To dream of buying God is to dream your own death, God's death, and the world's death. It's to dream of Hell.

Harlotry is trying to get with human energy what only God can give through grace. Harlotry is choosing a dead lover, an unsuitable helper.

As I read The Revelation, the Beast doesn't really scare me; the Dragon's not even that big of a deal. But the Harlot really makes me nervous . . . because I find her attractive. She looks a lot like home: A world economy in bed with the kings of the earth, the great consumer culture. She looks an awful lot like America.

We Americans think we can buy and sell anything, even kings, friends, and enemies (around the world). We have come to view each other as consumer items. So we consume wives and consume husbands. It's even the way we date in America. We *shop* for love.

I watched "Happy Days" in high school, so I dated around. Girls were like a consumer item: you shopped around and got the best you could, for you obtained her attributes and she increased your value.

In my ninth grade year I dumped a wonderful girl named Erin, because I could get *Lisa*. (I didn't even *know* Lisa, but she was a cheerleader . . . more valuable than Pom-Pom Girl, and almost a Liberty Bell!) I was a soccer player, and I had a cheerleader, and I was *making myself*.

During my tenth grade year she dumped me . . . because I got cut from the soccer team. Then suddenly Erin became really attractive. In fact, I found girls to be very attractive until I *had* them. Then they would lose their luster.

By the eleventh grade I was dating a girl named Susan, who was absolutely gorgeous until I thought I owned her heart. Then she would lose her magic. We would break up and then once again I couldn't live without her. You see, every time I thought I had her, I turned her into a harlot in my heart. It was during my senior year that I began thinking, "Maybe a bride isn't a consumer item. When I possess her as a consumer item, she dies. Maybe a bride is more like something I *serve*, and in serving I create."

So many Americans are getting divorced saying, "My husband or wife wasn't what I thought they would be. I'm returning the merchandise." If that's you, it reveals you didn't really marry a husband or wife. You thought you purchased a harlot. Your husband or wife is not a consumer item. They are not to be *consumed*, but *created*. And we learn that in marriage.

In Ephesians 5 Paul quotes Genesis 2 about God making Adam male and female. He says, "This mystery is a profound one, and it refers to Christ and His Church."

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish”
(Ephesians 5:25-27). *Finished.*

Christ creates His Bride—His people—by washing her with His Word—His Gospel—His very own body broken and blood shed. He washes her because she’s ugly. She’s become a whore. She knows good and evil because she’s chosen evil. She’s sold out to evil. But with His own flesh and blood He makes her—He creates her—to choose the good—Himself—her helper—her wish.

In Patterson, California two American teenagers, Felipe Garza and Donna Ashlock, dated. They dated until Donna began dating another boy. One day Donna doubled over in pain. Doctors soon discovered she was dying of a degenerative heart disease and desperately needed a heart transplant. Felipe heard about Donna’s condition and told his mother, “I’m going to die, and I’m going to give my heart to my girlfriend.”

Boys say crazy things, and Felipe appeared to his mom to be in perfect health. Three weeks later Felipe woke up and complained of pain on the left side of his head. He began losing his breath and couldn’t walk. He was taken to the hospital. He had had an aneurysm. Soon he was brain dead.

His sudden death mystified his doctors. While he remained on the respirator his family decided to let physicians remove his heart for Donna and his kidneys and eyes for others in need. After Donna received the transplant her father told her of Felipe’s death. He said, “Felipe donated his kidneys and eyes.” There was a pause, and Donna said, “And I have his heart.”

Imagine if you received a new heart from someone who loved you like that! Chad Miller writes, “Every moment you lived would be a tribute to the one who loved you so much he gave his life for you.” I imagine Donna loved Felipe with all her new heart. If only he’d rise from the dead, what a bride Donna would be!

In chapter 17 the Harlot is drunk on blood. In chapter 19 the Bride has been washed in blood (the Lamb’s life).

The Harlot is decked with jewels, gold, and pearls.

The Bride *is* jewels, gold, and pearls.

The Harlot is the abode of demons.

The Bride is the dwelling place of God.

The Harlot is a city, an economy of consumption.

The Bride is a city, an economy of creation.

The Harlot consumes, and she is a consumer finally consumed in the Lake of Fire. The Great Harlot is the *spirit* of harlotry.

But God loves harlots: Rahab, Mary of Magdalene, *you* (His people) . . . Don't you see His plan for the fullness of time is to take harlots (the children of Adam) and turn them into His Bride?

A friend heard Jesus whisper these words one evening in our worship service: "I love you. I love the whores, the murderers, the adulterers, but especially the whores."

We all were whores loving other gods, other lords. But Christ makes us His Bride. In Ezekiel 16 God says Jerusalem is a harlot, a whoring bride. He says, "I will deliver you to be burned by your lovers, but then I will establish with you my everlasting covenant. I will atone for your sins." That atonement is His body and blood.

Hosea is commanded to marry a harlot because Israel is a harlot. Hosea is commanded to redeem her—buy her back for fifteen shekels.

Jesus has purchased you from the Evil One with His own blood. There is no greater price. Jesus creates His Bride with His own flesh and blood. God creates His people in His image by ripping His own heart from His chest and placing it in a manger, then nailing it to a cross. In John 1 "Jesus is the Word from the bosom of the father."

Remember that The Revelation is somehow a scroll . . . a canvas. And it's only opened by the Lamb on the throne.

The Revelation of His Bride is purchased with His blood. She is created with blood.

Marcia said, "We are all creative and all called to creativity, whether it's singing, hospitality, administration, prayer." In the middle of that canvas she saw the Lamb. He was on the throne. Remember, He appears "as one who has been slain." He paints with His own blood. He paints *us*. On the canvas she saw *us*, Lookout Mountain Community Church, in poor villages around the world, in the inner city, shining His light.

She said the canvas began to beat in tempo with God's heartbeat. God showed Marcia that the canvas was wrapped around His heart. "So, Lookout Mountain," she said, "you have a calling on your heart to live out your creativity."

Our creativity is His creativity, for He has given us His heart. When you surrender to Jesus, when you love like Jesus, the heart of God beats in your chest, and you create in the image of God. When you rely on yourself and try to become self-actualized, you create death. You play the harlot.

Who is your helper? Then stop playing the Harlot. If you name the name of Jesus, don't let the Evil One lie to you. You're not the Harlot. You're His Bride.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." . . . In the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. . . . then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

-Genesis 1:26-28; 2:4b; 2:18-3:1

"Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper."

-Psalm 30:10 (David, the man after God's own heart)

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. . . ."

-John 14:16-18

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be

joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church

-Ephesians 5:25-32

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." . . . "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" --for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

-Revelation 7:13-14, 19:7-8

When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." . . . The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you." For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

-Hosea 1:2, 3:1-5

Again the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with bands. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born. And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yea, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. . . . But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by. . . . Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your shame was laid bare and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotries with your lovers, and because of all your idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you loathed; I will gather them against you from every side, and will

uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. And I will judge you as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. And I will give you into the hand of your lovers, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your fair jewels, and leave you naked and bare. They shall bring up a host against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women; I will make you stop playing the harlot, and you shall also give hire no more. . . . As I live, says the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them, when I saw it. . . . Yea, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD "

-Ezekiel 16:1-8, 15, 35-41, 48-50, 59-62

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. . . . "

-Revelation 21:1-3a

In loving me, you made me loveable.

-Augustine