

# **AWARENESS.SKILLS.KNOWLEDGE.**

## **Intergenerational Women's Ministry and Study of Women In the Bible**

St. Matthew AME Church

Reverend Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor|Teacher – Reverend Leslie Wilson, Facilitator

26 October 2024

This month provides an overview of how her

**S**piritual Gifts

**P**ersonality (Presence/Perspective)

**E**xperiences (Positions/Protection)

**C**ares/Passions

**I**nterest

**A**bilities

**L**ife Talents

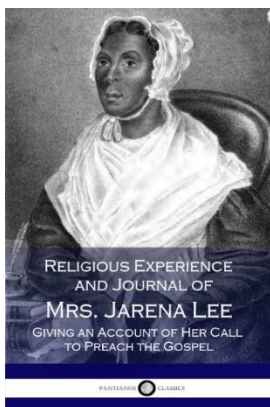
contributes to her special God-given purpose, equipping her to **minister to all God's children.**

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### **Jarena Lee (1783-1864)**

Jarena Lee was the first woman to be recognized as a preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In addition to blazing trails within the AME denomination, Lee was also the first African-American woman to publish an autobiography. [\*The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, a Coloured Lady, Giving an account of her call to preach the gospel\*](#) was first released in 1836.

“I have recorded how the Lord called me to his work, and how he has kept me from falling from grace, as I feared I should. In all things he has proved himself a God of truth to me.”



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From “All Women of the Bible” by Herbert Lockyer

### **Babylon The Queen**

"Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth"

### **Revelation 18:7-8 (Pages 267)**

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## **AWARENESS**



*Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’ Therefore, in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.* Revelations 18:7-8 (NIV)

### **The Book of Revelation**

- Believed to be written around 96 CE (Common/Current Era), the end of the 1st century and added to the canons in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, while the Roman Empire reigned.
- The Book of Revelation communicates the future of the world using symbolisms. The author believes the followers of Christ will be rewarded with paradise, after His second coming and after tribulation (7 years, some say, of distress and suffering), while the evil people of the world will be punished by a series of great disasters and destruction. Good will ultimately triumph and create a paradise for the followers of Christ.
- Revelation enables us to view reality from heaven's perspective. The book of Revelation is John's record of a series of visions that he was given and instructed to write down for us. Through this record of his visions, we get to see the realities of heaven and earth from the perspective of heaven.

### **Context - Babylon**

- Babylon symbolizes evil of the world, corrupt, false prophets, false churches, idolatry, wickedness, world order created by “lustful men”, “enemies of God”, “opposition to God’s will”, and sin.

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- It is mentioned from Genesis to Revelation, 280 times in the Bible, second city to Jerusalem.
- The first mention of Babylon is in 2 Kings 17:24, and the last mention is in Revelation 18:21.
- The ancient city of Babylon is located near modern-day Iraq, on the lower Euphrates River, about 55 miles south of Baghdad and birthed with a worldview.
- Babylon was the capital of the ancient cultural region of Babylonia, which was located in southeastern Mesopotamia.
- God destroyed Babylon, a wicked city in the ancient world (see Isaiah 13:19–22; Jeremiah 51:37, 52–58).
- “Babylon the Great”, commonly known as the “Whore of Babylon”, refers to both a symbolic female figure and a place of evil as mentioned in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament.
- Some biblical scholars recognize that "Babylon" is a cipher for Rome or the Roman Empire but believe Babylon is not limited to the Roman city of the first century.<sup>1</sup>

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### **Context - Women as Symbols In the Bible**

- A Woman is a person created by God and for God to bring about life. To be a woman is to be life giving. The inherent difference a woman possesses that a man does not is her empty space in the womb. The capacity to conceive and bring forth a child was entrusted to women alone.
- Caroline Vander Stichele demonstrated that the narrative of the Whore of Babylon follows many of the same patterns of the personification of capital cities as women who commit "prostitution / whoredom" and/or "adultery" in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). These capital cities, representing the states they govern, are alleged to have committed various sins that have rendered them sexually promiscuous, and therefore they will eventually be annihilated through various well-deserved violent punishments sent by the Israelite God Yahweh.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Koester says outright that "the whore is Rome, yet more than Rome."<sup>[14]</sup> It "is the Roman imperial world, which in turn represents the world alienated from God."

<sup>2</sup> Vander Stichele, Caroline (2000). *"Just a Whore. The Annihilation of Babylon According to Revelation 17:16".* *Lectio Difficilior. European Electronic Journal for Feminist Exegesis (1)*. [University of Amsterdam](#). *Archived from the original on 2 June 2021*. Retrieved 28 May 2021.

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- By using the feminine pronoun, the Bible portrays cities also as a source of comfort, security, and life-giving sustenance, similar to a mother's role.<sup>3</sup>
- (Read Isaiah 3:16-15) Writer gives a description of the haughtiness of Israelite women. God illustrates the pride of Israel's women in the way they walk, their dress, and the use their eyes. Instead of being modestly well-dressed and dignified, the walk, the dress, the whole appearance is designed to impress others and frankly, to scorn them. It is also designed to bring attention, prestige, and acclaim to the self. The reason Isaiah 3:16 contains such a harsh denunciation is because of the influence that women hold over a nation's morality—God expects them to be the primary, daily instructors of their children. If women largely determine the character of a nation through their instruction of their children in morality, spirituality, and ideals, then they wield critical power over the nation's future. They determine whether ideals of purity, integrity, unselfishness, and faith will prevail or fall.
- It ought not to be this way because the weight of instruction should fall at least equally on men. But in reality, because there is such a double standard in the world, women do most of the teaching. So, when that line of defense—the moral teaching of women—breaks, and the morality of women becomes debased, then there is no hope for the nation.<sup>4</sup>

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### **Feminized Jerusalem**

- Jerusalem is first referred to as "Daughter Zion" in the Bible in Isaiah 37:22, in a prophecy against Sennacherib's (suh na kir ib) invasion of Judea around 701 BCE (Before the Common Era/Before the Christian Era, years before the birth of Jesus). The term "Daughter Zion" is a metaphor that compares Jerusalem to a daughter who is protected by God. It suggests the sacred relationship between the people and the divine presence in the Temple and Jerusalem.
- The metaphor of Jerusalem as a woman include Amos 4:1-3, Psalm 137:1, Isaiah (1:8; 10:11; 47:7-9; 51:18, 52:2; 66:7-12), Jeremiah (50:31-32), Lamentations (1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 4:22), Ezekiel (28:2-8), Zechariah 3:7-8.
- The metaphor can take on a darker tone in passages that describe Jerusalem's devastation, such as in Isaiah 1:8 and Lamentations 1:6, 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, and 4:22.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.romereports.com/en/2014/05/16/why-does-the-bible-describe-cities-as-women-and-mothers/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/bible.show/sVerseID/17724/eVerseID/17724>

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- In Isaiah 40:2, God tells the prophet: “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated (taken away through atonement). Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins.” She has received enough and there will be no more punishment against her. (Note: Remember Jerusalem is the birthplace of the world’s 3 largest religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam.)

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### **Babylon the Queen – Chapter 17**

- She is a symbolic female figure and a place of evil as mentioned in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament. Her seductive powers are things that lead people away from church, her destruction is by those who used her not wanting love or giving respect but only lust and power and pleasure and she is destroyed by the ones she sought to destroy.
- She is a representation of "the great city which reigned over the kings of the earth" is associated with the beast of “seven heads” and “seven mountains” - five fallen (Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius), the one who was (Nero), and the one to come (Galba) and others who 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.” Revelation 17:14 (RSV)
- According to The Women’s Bible Commentary, The “Great Harlot” is mentioned “not based on a particular woman and is not intended to portray women in a negative light. Instead, she is of all expansion of the Old Testament images of unfaithfulness to God being personified as an unfaithful wife who prostitutes herself. She is the opposite of the virtues of mother and bride who represent the faithfulness church.”

### **Chapter 18 - What We Know**

- Babylon was identified as a woman – pronouns of “she”, “herself”, and “her” are used and the title “Queen”, different from chapter 17.
- The city of reference is Rome that is awed but will fall.
- “I will rule as a queen” speaks to Rome’s pride (but also to our pride) and subsequent destruction which even then had a “complex economic system”. She did not believe she would be dethroned but that her power was eternal.
- “I am not a widow” she says who maybe religious however one writer notes, but “she is more interested in what produces power and influences in the world.” She

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did not see herself as losing anything or mourning the loss of anything or face consequences of her actions.

- From the Church of the Living God: *Secretly she says in her heart: "I rule as a powerful queen; my lovers will never leave me and take away my luxury; I will never experience the grief of loss and need." Her addiction to power and comfort leads to arrogant self-sufficiency; the desire to avoid suffering leads to corruption, as anything can be done to keep what she has. Because of this arrogance, judgment will take her by surprise and overwhelm her. Her life will turn into death and sorrow, and her plenty to famine, and all that she gloried in will disappear like trash incinerated with fire, for mighty is the Lord God who exacts judgment on her.*
- *And the kings of the earth, her political lovers who committed vile spiritual idolatry with her and lived lavishly off of her, will mourn over their loss when they see the extent of her collapse. But... they will stand at a distance. They only loved her for what she could do for them. They will be full of fear that they, too, might fall victim to the same torment. They will moan, "Woe to you, our great city! Babylon, the most powerful city in the world! Your day of judgment has crashed down on you." <sup>5</sup>*

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## **BLESSINGS OVERFLOW!!**

**November 23, 2024: WOMAN OF THE MONTH – Orpah**

**Ruth 1 (Book Page 119-120)**

**December 28, 2024– Christmas Break**

**January 25, 2025: WOMAN OF THE MONTH – Peter's Wife  
Matthew 8:14-18; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41 (Book Page 220)**

**February 22, 2025 – WOMAN OF THE MONTH - Naomi  
The Book of Ruth (Book Pages 116-118)**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.clgonline.org/sermonblog/2022/3/6/babylon-is-fallen-revelation-17-18>; "Babylon Is Falling"



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## **SKILL**

**Step Thirty: Pride**

### **LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM BABYLON THE QUEEN**

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*In time, those who were ruled by the power of “her” shall be enslaved by the harlot and be made instruments of her destruction. The Lord’s portion is His people, His counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure to His glory and the happiness of all His people. Let us take warning from the things which brought self and others to destruction, and let us set our affections on things above, when we consider the changeable nature of earthly things.<sup>6</sup>*

### **Biblical Definitions of Sinful Pride<sup>7</sup>**

A Desire to Be God (Isaiah 14:13-14); Moral Self-Righteousness (Luke 18:11); Confidence in One's Accomplishments (Daniel 4:28-37); Ambition for Prominence (Mark 10:35-45); Lack of Teachability (Hebrews 13:17).

Pride is a grievous (serious) sin. It can be egregious (bad/shocking) yet inconspicuous (not clearly visible). Because it is so deceptive, we are often oblivious to our pride. Awareness of pride is essential since it hinders our relationship with God.

**1. Self-exaltation: Pride gives credit to herself. Do you exalt yourself?** God reminds us that every good thing comes from Him (James 1:16-17). Our human tendency is to credit ourselves when we succeed. Jesus warns that God will humble those that exalt themselves (Matthew 23:12). Whoever exalts herself will be humbled, and whoever humbles herself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12). Do not exalt yourself! Give glory to the gift giver, our Father!

**2. Self-promotion: Pride welcomes credit from others. Do you promote yourself through others?** Instead of exulting ourselves, some let others exalt them even to the point of seeking it out. But accepting credit from others is another form of pride. When we

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary of the Whole Bible, Page 1286

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from a study on the six forms of pride <https://www.biblesumo.com/different-forms-pride/>

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put forth our virtue and success so that others complement us, we are being prideful. Jesus chided those who paraded their righteous behavior to promote attention (Matthew 6:1-2). Keep in your heart “if it were not for the Lord on my side, where will I be?” Do not promote yourself (Luke 18:10-14). Promote God's goodness, grace and mercy.

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### **3. Self-justification: Pride expects credit from God Himself. Do you justify yourself?**

We should avoid seeking God's admiration (what are ways we do this?). Expecting credit from God is another form of pride. Christ's substitutionary death on the cross is the only reason we avoid God's anger, punishment, and judgment. He bore our guilt, and He credits us His righteousness when we place our trust in Him. Consequently, our fellowship with God is restored because of Christ's imputed righteousness. We have nothing to offer! Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

*The next three forms of pride are subtle since they are disclosed in failure.*

**4. Self-degradation: Pride can tear you down. Do you degrade yourself?** Many don't expect to find pride in their hearts when they are failing. When you tear yourself down, you are being prideful (are you also say God made a mistake with you?). You are prideful because you are self-absorbed. You are focusing on yourself (I, my, me), not others (not we, our, us) and not on Christ. So instead of rejoicing in the success of others and trusting in God's sovereignty, a prideful person concerns only herself. The great secret to humility is not to focus on yourself at all, but to fill your mind and heart with the glory of God revealed in the sin-conquering death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**5. Self-demotion: Pride compares herself to others. Do you demote yourself?** A prideful person can degrade herself privately or publicly. Self-demotion is announcing that you have performed worse than others. You convince others that you are less or you have less. You argue in public that compared to others, you are inferior. You create a “pity party” for yourself. The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego and the desire of self-pity is not really for others to see them as helpless, but as heroes. The need for self-pity does not come from a sense of unworthiness, but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness! It is the response of unapplauded pride.

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Self-demotion is another form of self-promotion. When you castigate yourself in front of other people, you are fishing for affirmation. You want others to reaffirm, “No, you are not a loser; you are a winner.” Placing yourself as inferior to others is another form of pride. You might even change your comparison to make yourself feel superior. By looking for someone else with whom to compare yourself, you can puff yourself up. The line of reasoning goes like this: “even though I’m worse than (not as good as) you, I’m still better than her”. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next woman. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride is gone. The practice of comparison and competition welcomes the temptation of pride. Guard against comparing yourself with others to make yourself look good. Don’t seek attention and affirmation from others by making yourself look inferior.

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**6. Self-condemnation: Pride judges herself. Do you condemn yourself?** This form of pride is private, manifesting itself in times of personal failure. It does not seek the affirmation, approval, and admiration of others. Instead, this form of pride occurs when a person condemns herself because she does not meet her own standard. Sometimes we mislabel self-condemnation as depression. We think a person who hopelessly condemns herself is depressed, so we attempt to cheer her up. When we are unsuccessful in changing her mindset, we conclude her depression runs deep. But the woman who condemns herself is not primarily dealing with depression. Her root problem is pride. The self-condemned person places her perspective, standard, and assessment above everyone else. She resists God’s grace because she denies God is the true source of salvation, blessing, and truth. She refuses the help of others and may even isolate. Compared to her companions and God, she thinks she knows herself better. But we were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3–6). At the end of the day, you don’t need to condemn yourself, leave that to God.

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name)

Today I engaged in a conversation about a place symbolized as a woman in the Bible who showed disregard, disrespect, disobedience to the Father. As an influencer she allowed her position to steer admirers, followers into a path of personal, spiritual and financial destruction instead of prosperity. God’s gifts are intended to be used for good and not evil, to help and not harm, giving Him and not self all the glory. I know trusting God and being patient with God is best for my journey and testimony as an Ambassador of Christ. Because “God is doing something wonderful in me!” I must be aware of tools Satan will use - pride, impatience, doubt, arrogance, distrust, strife, and division for example - to keep me on the temporary and not on the eternal. Satan wants to keep me from being friendly, welcoming, helpful, warm, kindhearted, neighborly, hospitable so that I can serve the Lord in mind, spirit and heart. Because of what I heard, shared, learned, witnessed, thought about, I want to remember most for “spirited understanding” is,

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In Jesus Name,

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**

**1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

**Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

**988**

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