

Biblical Allusions in Beloved

Loaves and Fishes

This line is used to describe Baby Suggs' feast for the others in the community. This allusion comes from Matthew 15-15, Mark 6, and Luke 9. They all mention the miracle of Jesus miraculously feeding thousands with five loaves of bread and two fish.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

When Schoolteacher and the others come to get Sethe, Morrison describes the group as "four horsemen." The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are described in Revelations. The chapter tells of a scroll in God's right hand that is sealed with seven seals. When the first four of these seals are opened, four horsemen appear:

I looked, and there was a white horse. The horseman on it had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he went out as a victor to conquer.

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse went out, a fiery red one, and its horseman was empowered to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him.

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and there was a black horse. The horseman on it had a set of scales in his hand. Then I heard something like a voice among the four living creatures say, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius — but do not harm the olive oil and the wine."

When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and there was a pale horse. The horseman on it was named Death, and Hades was following after him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague, and by the wild animals of the earth. (Revelation 6:2-8)

Lot's Wife

When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot's wife is warned not to look back:

At daybreak the angels urged Lot on: "Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city." But he hesitated. Because of the Lord's compassion for him, the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters. Then they brought him out and left him outside the city. As soon as the angels got them outside, one of them said, "Run for your lives! Don't look back and don't stop anywhere on the plain! Run to the mountains, or you will be swept away! ... But his wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. (Genesis 19:15-17, 26)

Pride

Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

The Spirit is Willing

"Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

Sufficient Unto The Day

Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34)

Don't Study War No More

He will settle disputes among the nations and provide arbitration for many peoples. They will turn their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will not take up the sword against other nations, and they will never again train for war. (Isaiah 2:4b)