

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Revelation Chapter 18 vs 1 – 19

Bible Study Notes on The Fall of Babylon

Chapter 18: The Fall of Babylon

What is the nature of Chapter 18?

- With *Chapter 18* we recommence the sequential story of the tribulation
- It picks up the story from the end of *Chapter 16*, the Seventh Bowl
- The fall of Babylon was proclaimed by the second of the three flying angels in Chapter 14 (a parenthetical chapter) – see *Revelation 14: 8*
 - The first angel had proclaimed the gospel to the world calling on earth-dwellers to “Fear God and give glory to Him” - it is a final call to repentance and salvation
 - The third angel proclaims the eternal damnation of those who worship the beast and receive the mark of the beast – the ‘beast’ is the coming world leader
 - The second angel proclaims “*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*”
 - Clearly these proclamations relate to the times of the climax of God’s judgement – the Seven Bowls
- The focus in Chapter 18 is on ‘Babylon the Great’
 - It relates to the Physical city – the centre of the beast’s political power
 - It relates also to Spiritual Babylon – that world system of idolatry and all its associated wickedness – this is the principal focus in this chapter
 - Hence the chapter is speaking about the fall of both – ‘spiritual’ Babylon and ‘literal’ or ‘physical’ Babylon
- Babylon is the harlot of *Chapter 17*

What do we know of physical Babylon?

- All forms of occultic practices have had their origins in the original city of Babylon (Babel) – built in the land of Shinar – see *Isaiah 47, Genesis 11: 3-4*
- Babylonian Legend
 - Nimrod founded Babylon; Tammuz, the son of Nimrod and his queen, Semiramis (a high priestess), are identified with the Babylonian Sun God
 - Nimrod founded the original Babylonian religion – it developed into the worship of his (Nimrod’s) widow Semiramis (a high priestess) and his posthumous son, Tammuz – they were worshipped following the winter solstice (December 22-23)
 - These legends replicated in different traditions:
 - Semiramis & Tammuz of Babylon
 - Ashtoreth & Tammus of Phoenicia
 - Isis & Horus of Egypt
 - Aphrodite & Eros of Greece
 - Venus & Cupid of Rome
- Tammuz was said to die at the solstice (when the day is shortest and night longest) – the death celebrated by burning a ‘Yule’ log – and he was said to be

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reborn the day following – celebrated by having a trimmed tree in place of the Yule log

- Babylon has always been Satan's headquarters – from the days of Nimrod and Semiramis
 - These pagan practices were absorbed into Christian practices when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity
 - As Babylon was conquered by subsequent empires, this entire religious system was transplanted, first to Pergamos (*Revelation 2: 12-17*) and then to Rome
 - Pagan Rome was a Latin packaging of Babylonian practices
- Babylon as a city was not destroyed when Cyrus captured it, but it was gradually superseded and neglected
 - Saddam Hussein spent much money rebuilding it (uncompleted)
 - Scripture suggests it will be rebuilt and again become the focus of all world systems; political, commercial and religious (see *Zechariah 5: 5-11*)

What do we know of spiritual Babylon?

- Babylon is the root of all idolatry
 - It is the worship of idols (false gods) – this includes:
 - Humanism – the worship of man and his achievements
 - Creation – the worship of the created rather than the Creator ...seen today in the 'Climate Change' agenda
 - Money – the worship of money by corrupt elites making themselves rich and others poor
 - Power – the worship and seeking of power and control through war, or the subversion of laws and systems, or the subtle control of media subverting truth and promoting falsehoods
 - Sexual Perversion – the worship and practice of sexual sin and perversion – today this would include the 'Trans' agenda
- Idolatry is the fundamental departure of man from obedience to God's first commandment: "*You shall have no other gods before Me.*" *Exodus 20: 3*
 - It leads directly to the contravention of the second commandment – the making of idols (false Gods) – see *Exodus 20: 4-5a*
 - It subsequently leads to the failure to obey all the other commandments
- Paul writes to the Romans about the results of idolatry, as God abandons man to its consequences (see *Romans 1: 18-32*)

Ch 18 Vs 1-8 The Fall of Babylon

The Angel's Proclamation

Verses 1-3

What does John see next?

Verse 1

- Again in *verse 1*, Greek: '*meta tauta*' – 'after these things' (as in *Revelation 4: 1*) – it indicates that the narrative of the end time events is resumed; but also it is after John has been given the understanding of Babylon, the harlot in *Chapter 17*
- Another angel comes, from heaven – and one might think it is the Lord
 - He has great authority
 - His glory illuminates the earth

- However the word used clearly identifies this being as an angel (Greek: *aggelos*)
- The sudden, blazing appearance of another angel will certainly rivet the world's attention on him and his message – because the world was plunged into darkness at the pouring out of the fifth bowl judgement

What proclamation does the angel make and what is its significance?

Verses 2-3

Babylon is fallen, is fallen

- The angel cried out mightily – the Greek means to call aloud forcefully – publishing the fall of Babylon, as a thing already come to pass
 - He cries out with a loud [KJV: strong] voice (Greek: *megas phōnē*)
- ‘Babylon the great (Greek: *megas*) – Babylon is described as great, that is meaning it was strong and powerful
 - It is plural – applying to both ‘spiritual’ Babylon in its idolatrous worship and to the ‘literal’ Babylon, the seat of power of the Coming World Leader
 - There are scholars on both sides of the debate about spiritual or literal – but it can be applied to both literal Babylon (the seat of the Coming World Leader) and to spiritual Babylon
- Repetition ‘is fallen, is fallen’ – repeating *Revelation 14: 8* and *Isaiah 21: 9* – indicating it is an event determined by the Lord which is certain and imminent – in this case, at this point it is done...the power of Babylon is destroyed
- We see this repetition principle elsewhere in scripture:
 - Joseph interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams (*Genesis 41: 25, 32*)
 - Daniel interpreting the writing on the wall (*Daniel 5: 25-30*)
- Babylon has become a dwelling place – a home:
 - A habitation of devils [NKJV: demons] meaning demonic spirits – it is their residence – as seen at the sounding of the sixth trumpet (*Revelation 9: 13-19*)
 - A hold [KJV] (Greek: *phulakē*) meaning fortress or prison; for every foul (unclean) spirit – Babylon has been/become their stronghold
 - A cage (hold or habitation) for unclean and hateful birds (e.g. vultures) – it is a place of protection
 - Note – birds are often ministers of Satan (see *Matthew 13: 4, 19*) in scripture
 - It is a common notion that unclean spirits, as well as ominous and hateful birds, used to haunt a city or house that lay in its ruins

Babylon has polluted the earth

- Nations drink of her fornication – becoming drunk, senseless (see *Revelation 14: 8*)
 - Spiritual Babylon lures the peoples and nations into spiritual drunkenness and fornication with false gods
 - Commercial Babylon seduces the unbelieving world into a materialistic stupor
- Kings (and rulers/powers) commit fornication with her – they use her and join with her, adopting her idolatries – such that she actually rules them (*Revelation 17: 18*)
 - They encouraged and obliged their subjects to do the same as them in their dominions (*Revelation 17: 2*)
- Merchants (Companies & Traders) become rich through her – seduced by abundance her of ‘delicacies’ [NKJV: luxuries]...the idolatry of materialism (see *Matthew. 6: 24*) – which is made clear in the latter part of this chapter

- We see this today in the power of huge multinational companies which exert power over politicians and media – and through them influence society
- Nations, Political Rulers and Corporate Leaders alike – the world’s elites – are swept up in this worldwide system of idolatry – worshipping idols of many types including political dominance, sexual gratification, wealth, power, materialistic opulence, as well as worship of false gods
 - See the Book ‘Money, Sex and Power’ by Richard J Forster

A Voice from Heaven gives Instruction

Verses 4-8

What instruction does the voice from heaven give – and to whom?

Verse 4

- A voice from heaven (an angel, or the Lord?) cries ‘Come out of her’ (Babylon)
- It is a Call to be Separated
 - God always calls His own to disentangle themselves from Babylon, the idolatry of the evil worldly system – see *Jeremiah 51: 6-9; 1 John 2: 15*
 - Kingdom Focus *Matthew 6: 33; 7: 13-14*
 - Fleeing Wickedness *Acts 2: 40*
 - Call to be Holy *2 Corinthians 6: 14-18*
 - Call to be Consecrated *2 Corinthians 7: 1*
 - The church in the NT are the ‘called out ones’ (Greek: *ekklēsia* is translated as ‘church’)
- The call is to be holy – not to partake in her sins
- The call is to salvation – to escape from her punishments – (Greek: *plēgē* , translated ‘plagues’, but also meaning ‘deadly wound ‘ as in *Revelation 13: 3*)
- The call is to ‘my people’ (see *Jeremiah 50: 4-9*)
 - Some scholars understand this as a call to the Tribulation Saints – but here the timing seems to be at the climactic end of the Tribulation when those saints will be praising and worshipping before the throne (see *Revelation 15: 1-4*)
 - ‘My people’ here indicates it is a call to God’s people Israel:
 - The Covenant with Israel *Genesis 17: 7; Exodus 34: 10*
 - The Chosen People *Deuteronomy 7: 6*
 - To Unfaithful Israel *Isaiah 52: 11*
 - The Prophet’s Call *Jeremiah 15: 16-17*
 - The Returnees to Jerusalem *Ezra 10: 11*
 - Isaiah and Jeremiah both gave God’s message to Israel to flee Babylon of old – see *Isaiah 48: 20; Jeremiah 50: 8; 51: 6-9, 45*

What is said of the Sin of Babylon?

Verse 5

- The greatness of Babylon’s sin – it has reached to heaven
 - The cup of abominations is now full – heaped up
 - Like Sodom & Gomorrah *Genesis 18: 20-21*
 - Like the Golden Cup in the harlot’s hand *Revelation 17: 4*
- When the sins of a people reach up to heaven, the wrath of God will reach down to the earth
- God remembers her iniquities (the Greek word ‘*adikēma*’, translated as ‘iniquities’, means not just idol worship but also evil doing)
- God will not remember the iniquities of His people (*Jeremiah 31:34*) but for unrepentant Babylon, there will be no such forgiveness, only judgment

- Punishment is imminent (see *Revelation 16: 19*) – indicating this ‘voice from heaven’ is at or around the time of the Seventh Bowl

What is said of the Judgement of Babylon?

Verses 6-8

- Appropriate rewards – like for like (*verse 6*)
 - Render to her just as she rendered to you – this is being said to ‘my people’, that is...Israel
 - It seems Israel will be used of God to repay nations for the iniquities committed against them (Israel and the Jewish people)
 - Although private revenge is forbidden, God will have his people act under Him, when called to it, in pulling down his and their inveterate and implacable enemies – judgement is God’s prerogative (*Romans 12: 19*)
 - The wickedness of Babylon (both physical and spiritual) is and has been very great; for she had not only forsaken the true God herself, and set up idols, but had with great art and industry drawn all sorts of men into the spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury had retained them in her interest
 - Biblical Principles of Appropriate Recompense
 - An eye for an eye *Exodus 21: 23-25*
 - As you have served us *Psalms 137: 8; Jeremiah 50: 15, 29; 51: 24, 49*
 - According to her works *2 Timothy 4: 14-15; Revelation 13: 10; 16: 5-6*
- Double [KJV: ‘double unto her double’] according to her works (*verse 6*)
 - Mystery Babylon’s golden cup was full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication which made the peoples drunk (*Revelation 17: 1-2*) – and she was drunk with the blood of the saints (*Revelation 17: 6*)
 - God only punishes appropriately and justly
 - Double – He punished Israel so (*Isaiah 40: 1-2*)
 - Double has the sense of "full," or "overflowing" – the punishment will fit the crime (see *Jeremiah 16: 18*)
 - Double indicates an abundant and utter destruction – a suitable and sufficient punishment – full compensation
- In The Cup She Has Filled (*verse 6*)
 - The cup of wickedness from which so many people have drunk
 - The wine of the wrath of her fornication (Greek: *porneia*) – *Revelation 14: 8, 17: 2, 17: 4*
 - Those peoples and nations who have drunk from Babylon’s cup will drink the cup of the wine of God’s wrath – *Revelation 14: 10, 16: 19*
- Glorifying Herself & Living Luxuriously (*verse 7*)
 - Spiritual Babylon acts proudly and haughtily – exalting herself above all emperors, kings, and princes, above all kingdoms and states, and also above all churches
 - She assumes arrogant titles, and even blasphemous names – just as the archetypal coming world leader does – see *Revelation 13: 1*
 - Satan has deceived men through spiritual idolatry (Babylon) – hence so does the Coming World Leader – all seeking to pervert peoples and nations
- Measure for measure (*verse 7*)
 - A Biblical principle – see *Matthew 7: 2*
 - Her torment and sorrow will be proportionate to her self-aggrandisement and luxurious lifestyle
 - Glory belongs only to the Lord (*Psalms 115; Revelation 14: 7*)

- She thinks of herself as queen, sitting on top of everything – and safe from loss and sorrow
 - She is Boastful and Blasphemous – for she is ‘the mother of harlots’ (see *Revelation 17: 5*)
 - She Proclaims she is a Queen and No Widow – a boast against Israel who is portrayed in scripture as widowed and divorced
 - Isaiah prophecies of this day and this boast (*Isaiah 47: 8*)
 - She proclaims she is a Queen – ruling peoples and nations
 - Israel is portrayed in scripture as a divorced wife (*Jeremiah 3: 8*) but this situation was not to be permanent (*Jeremiah 3: 14-17; Hosea 2: 16-20; Isaiah 62: 4*)
 - Jerusalem is portrayed as a widow (*Lamentations 1: 1-7*) but again she will be restored (*Zechariah 8: 1-8*)
- Destruction in One Day (*verse 8*)
 - Daniel records that Babylon of old fell in one day (*Daniel 5: 30*)
 - Destruction will come suddenly (including widowhood and loss of children) as prophesied by Isaiah (see *Isaiah 47: 9*)
 - Her plagues will come in one day – an indication that the seven bowls of judgement will happen speedily, one after the other in quick succession
 - Yeshua speaks of this time as ‘shortened’ (*Matthew 24: 22*) for the sake of the elect (Israel)
 - These could include not only the seven bowls (*Revelation 16: 1*), but also the special destruction of the physical city of Babylon as well, described as "death and mourning and famine"
 - Judgements on Babylon – and on the Peoples & Nations who have ‘drunk her wine’
 - Death - the pale horse (*Revelation 6: 8*)
 - Mourning – she shall be widowed and lose her children (*Isaiah 47: 9*)
 - Famine – her luxurious lifestyle gone – the black horse (*Revelation 6: 6*)
 - Burned with Fire – like God’s judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis 19: 24*), and as it was in Rome in 64AD – and the destruction wrought on Jerusalem in 70AD – so it will be for Babylon – physical and spiritual, in the end times (*Isaiah 47: 14; Revelation 17: 16*)
 - It is the mighty Lord God who will punish her with fire

Ch 18 Vs 9-19 The World Mourns Babylon’s Fall

This section is a lament, similar to that of Ezekiel over Tyre (*Ezekiel 27*)

Who are first mentioned as mourners over Babylon’s fall?

Verses 9-10

The Kings of the Earth

- The Kings of the Earth are first mentioned
 - Kings – Greek: *basileus* meaning a foundation of power
 - Earth – Greek: *gē* meaning ‘soil’ or, by extension, region or the earth
 - Hence ‘Kings of the Earth’ can be understood to mean sovereigns, rulers and governments - but also those who have power over people through other means such as financial control or through the media
 - These ‘Kings’ use and are used by ‘spiritual’ Babylon

- It is they who committed fornication with the harlot Babylon (joined with her and used her and were used by her), who are now despairing at her demise
 - Their luxurious living has ceased
 - The political leaders of the world (who pledged allegiance to the Coming World Leader – *Revelation 17: 12*) will weep because the loss of his capital city will signal the doom of his empire, and with it, the source of their power
 - The power of the ‘kings of the earth’ rests on the deception of peoples by spiritual Babylon – this has given them wealth, power and control (albeit they too are controlled!)
- They weep and lament – not over Babylon’s sin but over her destruction
 - They see the smoke of Babylon’s burning – the unholy capital city and the collapse of spiritual Babylon
 - They stand afar off – for fear (that they will share her torment) – they will!
 - The suddenness of Babylon’s fall (physical and spiritual) – from greatness and from power over men – shocks them
 - In one hour judgement has come – sudden and catastrophic (see *Isaiah 47: 9*)

Who are the second mentioned as mourners over Babylon’s fall? Verses 11-17a

The Merchants of the Earth

- The Merchants of the Earth (who profited from Babylon’s wickedness) are also now despairing at her demise
 - Merchants – Greek: *emporos* meaning tradesmen – can be understood to include all who make money through selling (e.g. goods, services, financial providers and traders) – this covers all who have gained economically from Babylon... particularly from spiritual Babylon which controls the appetites of men and women, peoples and nations (*Revelation 18: 3*)
 - They weep and mourn (wail) – not over Babylon’s sin but over her destruction and the loss of their wealth
- Their trade and source of wealth have vanished in an instant
 - The list of their trading shows wealth derived from the trading and selling of various goods:
 - Ostentatious adornments (*verse 12*)
 - Objects made from wood, ivory, bronze, iron & marble (*verse 12*)
 - Fragrances and oils (*verse 13*)
 - Wine and Agricultural products (*verse 13*)
 - Armaments (*verse 13*)
 - The Bodies of Men – the Slave Trade and modern mechanisms of slavery which entrap (*verse 13*)
 - The souls of men - men sold out to materialism (*verse 13*)
 - The hollowness of the extortion of wealth from such things is revealed
 - These verses show that commercial activities are a key part of Babylon – but it would be false to equate the City of London or Wall Street with Babylon – it is far more than just trading – but there clearly is a collapse of economic activity
 - All that the merchants sought to gain from spiritual Babylon is gone, forever – it the collapse of economic wealth and exploitation (*verse 14*)
- The merchants stand afar off (like the kings) – for fear (that they will share her torment) – they will! (*verse 15*)
 - They bewail the loss of Babylon’s finery – see *Revelation 17: 4* (*verse 16*)

- Again it is repeated – in one hour judgement has come (*verse 17a*)
- The suddenness of Babylon's fall (physical and spiritual) – from greatness and from power over men – shocks them because their source of wealth has gone

Who are the third mentioned as mourners over Babylon's fall? Verses 17b-19

The Shipmasters of the Earth

- The Shipmasters of the earth (who became rich through Babylon's trade) are also now despairing at her demise (*verse 17b*)
 - Shipmasters – Greek: *kubernētēs* meaning helmsmen, ship captains, sailors and mercantile traders - they mourn the loss of Babylon and the lucrative transport business that went with it
- They too stand afar off and cry out (*verse 17b-18*)
 - They too weep and wail as they see the smoke of Babylon's burning
 - The physical nature of all this – applying to both literal Babylon and spiritual Babylon that are judged – is here emphasised
- They throw dust on their heads – sign of mourning – like the seafarers of Tyre – see *Ezekiel 27: 30* – sorrow for sudden loss of their livelihood (*verse 19*)
 - Throwing dust on one's head is a gesture used in mourning when persons were in afflicted and in distressed circumstances; denoting disorder, confusion, and debasement
 - Again is repeated – in one hour judgement has come (*verse 19*)
 - The physical nature of all this – affecting both literal Babylon and spiritual Babylon that are judged – is here emphasised (*verses 18-19*)

What do we understand from these mourners that are listed Verses 9-19

- Why these three groups of people are specified is a mystery – but it demonstrates the key aspects of Babylon in power, trading and economics – which mirrors the foundational roots of the European Community and Rome II
- Those who have accumulated power and wealth through the idolatrous systems of Babylon will be left desolate and in mourning
 - The cause of their mourning is not their sin, but their loss and their punishment
 - They did not lament their fall into idolatry, and luxury, and prosperity, and power; but their fall into ruin – the loss of their power and control, their wealth and their trading and traffic – spiritual Babylon's fall has cost them all these things and left them destitute – practically, financially and spiritually
 - The spirit of Babylon is a worldly spirit, and their sorrow is a mere worldly sorrow – only in relationship with the Lord is there security and peace
 - They did not lament for the anger of God that had now fallen upon them, but for the loss of their outward comfort and control
- Yeshua's words on laying up treasure are pertinent here (*Matthew 6: 19-21*)
- In one hour the power and riches of Kings, Merchants and Shipmasters has come to naught
- The Nations are not listed amongst the mourners – they are subject to and worshipers of the Beast – and used by Kings, Merchants and Shipmasters
 - But they will join with the Beast in making war on the Returning King of Kings – they want Babylon to be restored
 - They will all meet their demise directly under the Lord's hand