

Babylon Is Fallen

Revelation 18:1-24

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There is a love that God hates. It's described in the Bible in 1 John 2:15-17. It says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That's a well-known verse, and it's the love that God hates. The word "world" here is the Greek word "cosmos." It means "the evil, world system apart from God." John is talking about the things that are not of God, the evil-world-system way of doing things. Then he goes on to describe the world by saying, "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

I believe these verses summarize what we will read about in Revelation 18: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All that is in the world is going to come crumbling down by God's judgment on Babylon the Great. In Revelation 18, we see God's holy judgment upon the evil, lustful, materialistic, commercial system of Babylon.

Revelation 17 and 18 are a unit; I like to think of them as two sides of the same coin. In Revelation 17, the religious system was judged by God and destroyed. Now in Revelation 18, the commercial system will be destroyed. So the whole Babylonian system—not the people of Babylon the city or nation, but the system—is called that because the false, religious system came out of Babylon. And commercialism came out of Babylon. The rebellion against God came out of Babylon. This evil, world system has this Babylonian origin. So the term "Babylon" is used not for the Babylonian empire or city but for the evil, world system apart from God.

Babylon, in the last days, will have this mystery religion. In chapter 17, verse 5, it is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots." So this false religious system will arise after the true church has been "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air" in the rapture. No one but professing, false Christians will remain at that time. So there will be this ecclesiastical, ecumenical, false, religious system that will be organized called "Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots" that will be judged by God by using the Antichrist who will turn against her. Now we will see, in Revelation 18, that God directly destroys the Antichrist's kingdom of this network of commercialism that has the Babylonian influence on it, as well.

I'm convinced that this system is centered in the city of Rome; that the harlot and the Babylonian system of commercialism will have its seat, during the tribulation, in Rome.

These chapters are parenthetical, a pause, so we don't know when this will happen. But it's most likely to happen at the midpoint of the tribulation. Revelation 18 will probably happen sometime during the second half of the tribulation, when God Himself will actually judge this system of commercialism that is so against Him.

In 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul said, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." A whole variety of

plethora of evils comes when we are loving money. So certainly the commercial system of Babylon is characterized by the evil “lust of the flesh,” which are our sinful passions; by the “lust of the eyes,” which is our material possessions; and by the “pride of life,” which is our self-made position. So these sins are going to be seen as we go through Revelation 18. And “Do not love the world or the things in the world.”

This commercial system will be destroyed by God; Babylon will indeed fall.

I want to point out four sections in Revelation 18. It will be an outline which will characterize what is going on in the chapter. In verses 1-3, we see the announcement of Babylon’s fall. There is an announcement that Babylon has fallen. “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!...”—why?—“...“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.””

Notice in verse 1 that John says, “After these things.” What things? Going back into chapter 17, it means after the harlot has been judged by God. Then John sees “another angel.” This indicates it is not one of the seven bowl angels pouring out the wrath of God in chapter 16.

There are some Bible students who claim that this angel is none other than Jesus Christ, but there is no indication or reason why we should believe that. His Second Coming is made clear in chapter 19. But this parenthetical section happens sometime earlier in the tribulation describing His judgment on this evil, commercial Babylonian system.

So it is just an angel, but he is an angel with “great authority” and of great importance. He is an angel of great majesty, because “the earth was illuminated with his glory.”

Now we come to the announcement of Babylon’s destruction, in verse 2. “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.”” Some believe that the repetition of the words “is fallen” is because it fell in chapter 17 and it fell again in chapter 18. That’s possible, but it’s also possible that it’s repeated for emphasis. We, too, will sometimes repeat something for emphasis. So it could be talking about the certainty of the fall of Babylon.

And it’s not talking about the revived city of Babylon; it’s talking about the city of Rome. Earlier we saw that it sits upon seven hills or mountains. And, verse 2, it’s become the habitation of demons.

Angels fell with Lucifer, who was an angel, in rebellion against God. These angels that fell with Lucifer, the devil, became demons. So verse 2 is saying it’s the habitation of demons, and it’s “a prison for every foul spirit...”—another description for demonic spirits—“...and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!” In the Bible, quite often birds are used as symbols for evil. Sometimes they are used to represent Satan. In Matthew 13, you have the kingdom parables,

and twice, when Jesus gave the parable of the sower and the seed, some seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and ate it up. Satan comes to steal it away.

We also see in the Bible that a big tree grows up, and birds come to lodge in its branches. It's a picture of Christianity and the growing church when Satan shows up and joins Christians in the church and brings in apostate, false teaching. It shows evil coming into the church.

In this passage, we see one of many reasons, the first one in verse 2, why Babylon will be judged: it's Satan's house; it's demonically influenced. It's the "dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"

There's nothing wrong with being a businessman, there's nothing wrong with buying and selling, but if it's done for sinful reasons, like exploiting people, then it's condemned in the Bible. This theme of wealth and the believer runs all the way through the Scriptures. It's amazing to follow it. In 1 John 5:19, it says, "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." In the Greek, it literally reads, "The whole world is in the lap of the devil."

I know that we sing, "This is my Father's world," and in a sovereign way God is in control, but the Bible also declares that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." So we live in a fallen world, and there is a devil who rebelled against God and took demons with him to the earth. And Satan has infiltrated the commercial systems of the world and held evil, sinful men by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." This is not of the Father; it has become the habitation of the devil. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, it says that Satan "is the god of this age."

The second reason in our text for the judgment of Babylon, in verse 3, is that they worshipped pleasure. "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This fornication is a reference to spiritual adultery by turning away from the true and living God and worshipping materialism and money. They make things, money, wealth and pleasure the god of their lives. So they are intoxicated by the materialism of this Satanic, demonic, commercial system.

It says, "The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." They worship pleasure. In 2 Timothy 3:4, Paul says that in the last days, men will be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

We certainly see that today. Men have substituted their own lust and their own pleasure for the love of God. They've substituted "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" for God. Jesus had a lot to say about earthly wealth and earthly treasures. He said, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Take that to heart. Your life is more than the things you possess or your bank account or your portfolio or the value of your home or the car you drive. Life is more than these things, and we need to keep that perspective. He said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you.” He’ll take care of us and provide for us, but we need to make Him the passion, the goal and seek Him first.

So verses 1-3 is the announcement of judgment on Babylon, because it’s Satan’s house and they worshipped pleasure rather than God.

The second division of Revelation 18 is verses 4-8 and is the appeal to God’s people to come out of the Babylonian system. “And I heard another voice from heaven.” This is not the angel of verses 1-3; it is another voice, which seems to be the voice of God Himself “...saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest your share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’”

Now God doesn’t need to physically remember something like we do. That’s because God is omniscient and knows all things. It’s a figure of speech in the Bible for God finally saying, “Enough is enough; it’s time to judge.” When it says that God has “remembered her iniquities,” it means that God is now going to judge them in His holy, righteous judgment.

Verses 6-8 say, “Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”

In verse 4, God calls out of heaven and says, “Come out of her, my people” referring to the Babylonian system. But you may say, “Well, Pastor, isn’t this the tribulation period?” Yes, it is. “Then who are God’s people during the tribulation?”

Let me tell you who they are not. They are not the church. The church has already been “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air” in the rapture. When we get to the Second Coming, I will contrast the rapture with the Second Coming to show you they are clearly two, separate events. I believe they are seven years apart. So this is not the church; they have already been raptured.

They are what we call “tribulation saints.” These are people who get saved after the rapture, and God warns them not to get involved in this Babylonian system—either with “the mother of harlots” or with this commercial system. They are directed, “Come out of her, my people.” So these are tribulation saints.

But even though in context it refers to tribulation saints, it also has application to us today as the people of God. There is the Babylonian system of evil commerce in the world today, and we need to be careful that we don’t get intoxicated with its fornication and substitute it for the true worship of the living God.

Notice the reasons we should “Come out”: “Lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of

her plagues.” God is always protecting His people and delivering them from His judgments.

The Bible says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” One translation says, “Don’t let the world press you into its mold.” So don’t let the world conform you to its worldly way of thinking about possessions, money and materialism. Don’t become materialistic in your philosophy. This can often happen. We begin to love the world, then we conform to the world and we will find ourselves condemned with the world. So become Biblical in your thinking.

Notice that the third reason in this chapter for God’s judgment on Babylon is her pride, verse 7. “In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’”

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” The Bible actually says that God hates “a proud look.” The love of self, a proud look God hates. Not only is there “the lust of the flesh,” which is your passions, “the lust of the eyes,” which is your possessions, but there is “the pride of life.” Some have put these in the category of the sins of youth, “the lust of the flesh”—although old people can lust in the flesh, as well; middle-age sins, “the lust of the eyes”—your possessions; and senior-year sins, “the pride of life”—“Look what I’ve accomplished! Look at how marvelous I am! Look at all my achievements!”

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, in chapter 4, when Nebuchadnezzar was strutting on the walls of Babylon, looking over the city, which was one of the most majestic, beautiful, wonderful cities in history, he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” He thought it was by the works of his own hands. So God smote him with insanity. He turned Nebuchadnezzar into a wild beast; his hair grew long like feathers, his fingernails grew long like claws and for seven years he went out into the wilderness and ate grass.

So don’t live in pride. God takes it very seriously. Every time I hear someone strutting their stuff and talking about their accomplishments, I think, “Oh, no. I can’t watch. This is going to be bad.” You just might be eating grass in the backyard for a while. Nebuchadnezzar lived like this until he finally looked up to heaven and his sanity returned.

What a great statement; when we look back to God, when we look to heaven, when we get an eternal perspective, our sanity returns. And we realize that God gave us everything by His grace. We deserve no credit; it’s all glory to God. He gives us life, breath and strength.

If God has blessed you materially, then give Him the praise, thanks and glory that He deserves, and walk in humility. It’s so very important. If not, God is able to humble you.

So one of the sins of this system of Babylon is their pride. And as a result, verse 8, God certainly judges her. This chapter is all about the certainty of God’s judgment on this evil,

commercial system of Babylon. “Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire.” This is a coming, future judgment of God.

Back on 9-11 when the twin towers were destroyed, people were using this verse to say that God was judging America. That’s a tragic way to interpret this passage. This verse is yet future, when God will judge the evil, Babylonian system.

“...for strong is the Lord God who judges her.” The focus in verse 8 is actually on God and on His holy, righteous judgments—how He will punish and destroy and utterly consume this evil, world system.

The third section of this chapter is in verses 9-19. We move now from the announcement and the appeal to come out of her to the agony on earth over the fall of Babylon. There are three groups of men on earth discussed in this section. There are three groups of earth dwellers who wail and lament and mourn over the destruction of this commercial system of Babylon.

The first group is seen in verses 9-10. They are the kings of the earth. They will be the group that will be the most affected, because they are the world rulers, and the whole economic system collapses. “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment.” They don’t want to be judged with her. They’re “fair weather” businessmen; they did business with her, but when judgment comes, they move away from her as fast as they can. Verse 10, “...saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon!’—not just the system but a city, most likely Rome—“...that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.”

Then the second group to wail and lament on earth is in verses 11-16. They are the businessmen or merchants. “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore.” These men are looking at their losses and wailing and crying and standing afar off, because all of their profits and possessions have been lost, and their income is gone. No one buys their merchandise anymore. He lists their merchandise for us in ancient terms: “...merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood...”—this is a type of cypress wood that had a sweet scent to it—“...every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.”

So even in the future, there will be human slavery and buying and selling people for profit and gain. The sex trade today is a very profitable trade, but it is evil, demonic and God is going to bring judgment on it.

Verse 14, “The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are

rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!'"

So the kings of the earth are weeping, and the merchants of the earth are weeping, because it all comes tumbling down.

We know recently that when a pipeline that provided gas was turned off, it crippled the East Coast. We are very dependent on commerce. When the Covid-19 crisis hit, we freaked out and rushed to the markets to buy toilet paper. We stood outside Walmart weeping and wailing, because there was no toilet paper. The judgment of God! We only got a little taste of His judgment, but it's all going to come crashing down.

What does that tell us? Don't put your stock in this world. Don't put your stock in your stocks. Put your stock in Christ alone. He's the only sure foundation.

I looked up some of the wealthiest men in the world. They are Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Bill Gates. Jeff Bezos is worth \$179 billion. But think about this: he'll be one of the leaders of this wail club. Elon Musk will be crying, because it will all come crashing down. If you put your stock in this world, you'll lose it all. How tragic that is.

The third group, in verses 17-19, is the shipmasters or those who own shipping lanes and run ships that transport goods. "For in one hour..." There is a reference to one day and one hour, so I think it's going to happen in one hour of one day. We've seen stock markets crash. We know of Black Tuesday and all the things that happened. This can happen in one day and in one hour, because it's going to be a divine judgment from God.

"For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'"

The emphasis is on "one hour"; in one hour, God is going to destroy her. It's all going to come tumbling down.

Now all this is in preparation for Christ's Second Coming. The kingdoms of man will crumble and fall. Puny, little man, thinking that he is the god of the universe, thinking that he can create a utopian society. But it all comes crashing down in just one hour. Until Christ returns, our only hope is Him coming to set up His eternal, everlasting kingdom.

It's interesting that Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Sometimes when we leave the house, my wife will ask, “Did you lock the door?” I’ll say, “No; there’s nothing to steal.” It’s cool to live simply and not have a lot of expensive things. If a thief breaks in my house, he’ll say, “This must be a pastor’s house. Let’s get outta here. There’s nothin’ but Bibles and commentaries everywhere!”

“Where moth and rust destroy.” I kid you not; whenever I have a favorite sweater, a moth eats it. Have you ever noticed that? When I say, “This is my favorite sweater. I really like it!” the moths are listening in the closet. They purposely say, “That’s the one he likes. Let’s go eat it!” Whatever you set your heart on, God has a way of ripping it out. So don’t set your affections on things of this earth.

Jesus also said, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.” In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul said, “Do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” So get your affection on the eternal things that are above.

So my question to you is, “What are you living for?”

The last section of this chapter is verses 20-24. This is an intended contrast. They are weeping on earth—the kings, the merchants and the shipmasters. They lost everything on earth. But what is happening in heaven? Verse 20 tells us. “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets...”—why?—“...for God has avenged you on her!” God has judged her. On earth they are weeping because of their worldly way of looking at things. But in heaven, with an eternal perspective, they are rejoicing. So lamenting on earth but rejoicing in heaven.

Verse 21, “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.’” From verse 21-24, six times you see the word “anymore.” So this is the end of Babylon and its evil, corrupt system.

Verse 22, “The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her...”—that is, Babylon—“...was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

So all the persecution toward God’s people originated in ancient Babylon, and it became a buzz word for the idea of evil opposition to God.

Now notice, in verses 23-24, there are two more reasons why God will judge the Babylonian

system. It is because of her deception or her sorceries and deceiving the nations, and because of her support of persecution against God's prophets and saints, or His people.

Where it says that the angel took "a great millstone and threw it into the sea," there is another place in the Bible where a millstone is mentioned. Jesus said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." So Jesus takes this very seriously. Whether it is the harlot in chapter 17, the false religion, or the false, Babylonian commercial system in chapter 18, this millstone will be hung around the neck of this system and is judged by God and thrown into the midst of the sea.

So, verse 22, no more music, no more celebrations, no more work, and verse 23, no more "light of a lamp," no more weddings. It's the end of all the luxury, the tinsel, the glitz and the glamor of all the evil, world system. God brings judgment.

This whole chapter is really a tale of two cities. One city is Babylon, which is in rebellion against God and will be judged. The other city is the "New Jerusalem," chapter 21, verse 2. She is adorned for her bridegroom coming out of heaven.

You're either living in Babylon, or you're looking for the New Jerusalem. You're either living by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life," which is of the world and it passes away, or you're living for that which is not seen, the eternal. Like Abraham, you're looking for a city "whose builder and maker is God."

There is an interesting contrast, too, between Lot, who was Abraham's nephew, and Abraham. When they were arguing over the land and who would live where, Abraham told Lot to pick wherever he wanted to live, and Abraham would live elsewhere. Lot saw the beautiful, well-watered plains of Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot and his wife pitched their tent towards Sodom. Big mistake. Then the next thing we find is that they're living in Sodom. It starts with "Let's just get a little house overlooking the city," and then before long they're down in the city. They are then conformed to the world and condemned.

God then pulled Lot and his family out of Sodom. "Come out of her, my people." And God told them not to look back. But Mrs. Lot looked back and became a pillar of salt. And didn't Jesus tell us, "Remember Lot's wife"? I always thought that would make a great bumper sticker.

So be careful. "Come out of her, my people." And He said, "Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her," and He will receive us. How important that truly is.

In summary, 1 Timothy 6:6-12 is a section of Scripture that every Christian should know. In it Paul is warning Timothy about the false teachers who were teaching that godliness is a way to get rich. They were teaching what a lot of people are teaching today; if you're super spiritual, you'll be rich. You'll have health and wealth.

Paul said, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain." That's a great verse for Revelation

18. “For we brought nothing into this world...”—how true that is—“...and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” Have you ever seen a baby born with a Rolex watch or an iPhone? No. “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”

Now here’s the warning. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” He tells us what to follow. “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

I wanted to leave you with Paul’s letter to Timothy. “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” We have food and clothes, so let’s be content.

So flee, follow and fight. Flee the lure of intoxicating materialism. Follow after Christ with all your heart, soul and strength. Look for a city “whose builder and maker is God.” And “fight the good fight of faith.”