

Ministry of Grace

Revelation 18

¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ²And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. ³For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. ⁷As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.' ⁸For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her."

⁹And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." ¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. ¹⁴"The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!"

¹⁵The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ¹⁶"Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! ¹⁷For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" ¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste."

²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" ²¹Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; ²²and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, ²³and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. ²⁴And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth." [ESV]

Notes

In the previous chapter we saw the image of the harlot sitting upon the scarlet beast. That chapter was almost entirely symbolic and portrayed the harlot as the “mystery religious system” throughout history, especially of the end times. This harlot was destroyed by the kings who hated her, most likely at the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week when the Beast set-up the image of himself in the temple of Jerusalem, proclaiming himself to be god. Then, in the last verse of the chapter we see the statement:

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

This may serve as an introduction to the following vision of the great city of Babylon contained in chapter 18. Chapter 18 describes the literal city of Babylon which is representative of the economic system of the beast which is centered there.

A close examination of **Revelation 17:1-18** and **Revelation 18:1-24** reveals that these two destruction events are different. The great harlot of chapter 17 is associated with the great political power, but is not that political power itself. Notice that the destruction of the harlot is not mourned by the earth dwellers. By contrast, the destruction of Babylon in this chapter brings loud mourning from the earth’s political and economic powers. What is pictured in this eighteenth chapter is a large, prosperous city which represents the center of political and economic life during Daniel’s seventieth week (the tribulation period).

Revelation 18:1

¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.

“**After this**” – This indicates that the events of chapter 18 are a separate vision from chapter 17.

“**another angel**” – Some have claimed that this is Christ himself. The word “another” is *allos*, meaning another of the same kind, hence this is not Christ but another angel like the one in chapter 17.

“**the earth was made bright**” –The earth is now illuminated by this mighty angel. The picture of the angel illuminating the earth brings to mind the appearance of the angel to the shepherds at the time of Christ’s birth:

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. (**Luke 2:9**) [ESV]

Revelation 18: 2

²And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

“**Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!**” – This is the same exact proclamation made by the angel in **Revelation 14:8** just before the harvesting of the earth. Literally it is “fell, fell, Babylon the great, and became a dwelling place ...”

“**She has become**” – Literally, “and became”

“**a haunt**” – This is from the Greek word *phulakē*, which means “the place where someone is watched, guarded, or kept in custody, that is, a prison.”

Compare John’s description of the fall of Babylon with what the Prophet Isaiah said:

And behold, here come riders, horsemen in pairs!" And he answered, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground." (**Isaiah 21:9**) [ESV]

"I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity," declares the LORD. "And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD of hosts. (**Isaiah 14:22-23**) [ESV]

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance. Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged. (**Isaiah 13:19-22**) [ESV]

Revelation 18:3

³For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

“**passion**” – This is from *thumos*, which means “a violent passion of the mind.” It is sometimes translated as “wrath” and sometimes as “passion.” In this case passion probably most accurately represents what is being portrayed.

“**sexual immorality**” – This is from the Greek word *porneias* referring to harlotry. Throughout the Bible this is an image of idolatry. In this case it is most likely a reference to mankind worshipping riches rather than God.

“**merchants**” – From the Greek *emporos*, which is made up of *en* meaning “in” and *poros* meaning “a passageway.” Originally it meant one who was a passenger in a ship going from one place to another. Later it came to mean “one who trades with foreign countries by sea or land.”

“**have committed immorality**” – Literally, “committed fornication.” Keep in mind that spiritual fornication is giving praise and honor to anyone or anything other than God. This is clearly a reference to spiritual fornication.

“**have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.**” – Literally, “became wealthy from the power of her luxury.”

Notice the emphasis on riches and luxury. Apparently, the “god” that is worshipped by the people of the kingdom of the beast is wealth. James, in his general epistle may have been prophetically speaking of this time and event when he said:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. (**James 5:1-5**)

Revelation 18:4, 5

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

“**another voice from heaven**” – Since “another” is *allos*, meaning “another of the same kind,” this is most likely the voice of another angel proclaiming God’s message.

“**Come out of her**” – It is a common theme throughout the Bible for God to admonish His people to “come out” and to be separate from the world. Not only did God warn Israel to separate herself from the nations around her, Christians are admonished to separate themselves from the world system and the things of the world as well:

Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. (**Isaiah 52:11**) [ESV]

Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (**2 Corinthians 6:17**) [ESV]

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. (**1 John 2:15**) [ESV]

This, however, appears to be a call to come out of Babylon specifically. Compare this verse with the following verses:

Flee from the midst of Babylon; let everyone save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her. (**Jeremiah 51:6**) [ESV]

And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and take out of his mouth what he has swallowed. The nations shall no longer flow to him; the wall of Babylon has fallen. "Go out of the midst of her, my people! Let everyone save his life from the fierce anger of the LORD! (**Jeremiah 51:44, 45**) [ESV]

And, compare this to the message the angels gave to Lot just before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah:

Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." (**Genesis 19:12, 13**) [ESV]

“**heaped high as heaven**” – The best texts read “have been stuck together as far as heaven.” This may be a play on words because of the bricks of the tower of Babel having been “stuck” or “glued” together with mortar and the tower was intended to reach into heaven.

“**God has remembered her iniquities.**” – Contrast this with what God said to the Jews through the prophet Jeremiah:

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (**Jeremiah 31:34**)

Revelation 18:6, 7

⁶Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. ⁷As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give

her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'

This apparently is an indication from the angel of what God is about to do. It is not our place to take vengeance, as Paul told us in the book of Romans:

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (**Romans 12:19**) [ESV]

God is now taking out his vengeance on the world system of Satan.

"and repay her double for her deeds" – Literally this reads, "double to her double according to her works."

This is the same "double for her sins" that Israel received:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (**Isaiah 40:1, 2**) [ESV]

"she glorified herself and lived in luxury" – The overarching spiritual fornication that exists in the Babylonian world system of Satan in the end times is pleasure and self glorification. God will respond to this with torment and sorrow.

"torment" – The Greek word is *basinismos*, which refers to the pain of torture.

'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.' – This is another example of those of the world system of Satan taking credit for all that God has provided. Compare this verse with what Isaiah said:

Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. (**Isaiah 47:5**) [ESV]

Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children" (**Isaiah 47:8**) [ESV]

Revelation 18:8

⁸For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

Compare this with what Isaiah had to say:

These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments. (**Isaiah 47:9**) [ESV]

The destruction of the city of Babylon will occur suddenly. It will start with **"death and mourning and famine."** Then, suddenly the city will be burned with fire, perhaps in the same way as Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with fire and brimstone coming down from heaven.

"burned up with fire" – Literally "completely burned down with fire."

Revelation 18:9, 10

⁹And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

“**kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury**” These are the ten kings who rule beneath the beast and those who rule under them. They have committed harlotry (the Biblical symbol of spiritual unfaithfulness and spiritual rejection of God) with the world system. That is, they have made the attaining of riches their god, which is the final form of idolatry before the return of Christ.

“**weep**” – Greek *klaio*, meaning “to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief.”

“**wail**” – Greek *koptomai*, meaning “to strike or beat one's body, particularly the breast, with the hands in lamentation, to lament, to wail, to express great sorrow.”

The first group of mourners identified is the kings of the earth. They will cry out in grief and great sorrow because the system upon which they have built their empires is crashing at their feet. This is not unlike bankers and investors who were destroyed by the stock market crash in the first half of the 20th century.

“**Alas, alas**” – This could also be translated as, “woe, woe.” It is given to show an exclamation of great grief and sorrow.

“**For in a single hour your judgment has come.**” – They will be amazed at the rapidity of the destruction of Babylon, recognizing that it means the destruction of the entire economic system they have staked their kingdoms on. They will also recognize it as judgment from God. Remember in verse seven when this economic system thought itself invincible? **'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.**

Revelation 18:11 - 13

¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

“**merchants of the earth**” – The next group to mourn the loss of Babylon is the merchants (those engaged in world trade). Notice that their mourning is not for the loss of the city and its people, but for their own loss: people will no longer buy their merchandise and they will suffer the loss of riches which they would have gained.

“**weep**” – Greek *klaio*, meaning “to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief.”

“**mourn**” – Greek *pentheō*, meaning “to grieve or to mourn.” This is the inward mourning that leads to the outward expression of grief (*koptomai*).

The reason for the distress of the merchants is that they no longer have customers for their expensive goods.

“**fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth**” – The fabrics that are mentioned, fine linen and silk are most highly prized in very hot climates because they afford the wearer with clothing which allows the body heat to escape. This is a possible indication that this is the actual city of Babylon which is being described.

Notice the list of goods includes expensive or extravagant things, not the staples of life. Also notice that the list of goods includes “**and slaves, that is, human souls.**” Obviously, a form of slavery for the very rich exists in this world system. John Phillips in his book *Exploring Revelation* wrote:

What a catalog of opulence! What a vivid picture of a great, commercial city, trafficking in every luxury the heart could desire. This is the world’s great Vanity Fair. It offers articles of adornment and display, beautiful things to grace the mansions of the world’s millionaires. It deals in exotic spices and perfumes, in delicacies for the table, in provisions for banquets, in slaves, and in the souls of men. And Babylon imported all these things. ... Babylon’s demand for this world’s goods was insatiable; ever it clamored for more and more! (Phillips, 1987)

Revelation 18: 14

¹⁴“The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!”

“**fruit**” – This is not the normal Greek word for fruit (*karpos*) but *opōra*, which is most likely derived from *opos*, meaning “juice” and *hora*, meaning “hour” or “time of.” *Opōra* literally refers to “late autumn, when fruit is finally ready to be picked.” Hence this likely refers to fruit that is at its peak ripeness, the very best.

“**delicacies**” – from the Greek word *liparos*, which refers to fatness of food. It could also refer to the shininess of the skin after being anointed with oil after a bath. Homer used this word to refer to the luxurious conditions of life, rich and comfortable.

“**splendors**” – from the Greek word *lampros*, which means “bright, shining, radiant, or dazzling. It is almost always used to describe clothing.

“**never to be found again**” – This is expressed with the Greek *ouketi*, meaning “no longer” followed by the double negative *ou mē*, which means “absolutely not at all!” This is the most emphatic negative that can be expressed in the Greek language.

All that is desirable in food and luxury items are gone from Babylon and will no longer exist in that city and will never exist there again, forever.

Revelation 18:15-17a

¹⁵The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ¹⁶“Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! ¹⁷For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”

What a portrayal of uncaring, self-serving greed that these merchants seem to have no care for the lives lost or even for the loss of their capital city! Their reason for grief is the fact that their source of wealth is gone.

Revelation 18:17b-19

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off¹⁸ and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?"¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

The third group to mourn over the loss of the great city of Babylon includes those who transport goods from one place to another. The fact that the three groups of mourners include rulers, merchants, and transporters indicates that this city is representative of an economic system more than a political or religious system. The final world empire, under the control of Satan and the beast, will make the acquiring of wealth and goods their god to the exclusion of all other religious systems and ideologies.

"threw dust on their heads" – This is not a sign of repentance but an ancient expression of grief.

"wept" – Greek *klaio*, meaning "to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief."

"mourned" – Greek *pentheō*, meaning "to grieve or to mourn." This is the inward mourning that leads to the outward expression of grief (*koptomai*).

Revelation 18:20

²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

The angel of verse one and two now directs his comments to the heavenly throng (most likely watching the events as they transpire). In deference to the pain and anguish which is occurring on the earth there is a proclamation of rejoicing in heaven. The rejoicing is over the fact that God has finally judged the world system of Satan.

Revelation 18:21

²¹Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

The mighty angel pictured here is performing a symbolic act. The casting of the millstone into the sea indicates the total destruction and annihilation of all that Babylon stands for and all those who participate.

This has an amazing resemblance to what Jeremiah said regarding the destruction of Babylon:

And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, and say, 'O LORD, you have said concerning this place that you will cut it off, so that nothing shall dwell in it, neither man nor beast, and it shall be desolate forever.' When you finish reading this book, tie a stone to it and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disaster that I am bringing upon her, and they shall become exhausted.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. (**Jeremiah 51:61-64**) [ESV]

Revelation 18:22, 23a

²²and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be

heard in you no more,²³ and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more,

None of the activities of life, entertainment, craftsmen working at their trade, preparation of food, night time activities, and the sounds of love, will ever exist in Babylon again. Notice the five times that the expression “not ... anymore” is proclaimed. This is the final end of Babylon. Compare this with what the Old Testament prophets said:

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. **(Isaiah 13:19, 20)** [ESV]

I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity," declares the LORD. **(Isaiah 14:22)** [ESV]

Because of the wrath of the LORD she shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation; everyone who passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds. **(Jeremiah 50:13)** [ESV]

"Therefore wild beasts shall dwell with hyenas in Babylon, and ostriches shall dwell in her. She shall never again have people, nor be inhabited for all generations. **(Jeremiah 50:39)** [ESV] and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant. **(Jeremiah 51:37)** [ESV]

Revelation 18:23b, 24

for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."

“**sorcery**” – This is translated from the Greek word *pharmakeia* (from which we get our English word pharmacy). It refers generically to drugs. It could be a reference to the dependence that people have on drugs to keep them “healthy,” or the drugs they use to achieve a “high.” Witchcraft and sorcery are laden with potions and drugs of various kinds. As a result, some have interpreted this as a reference to the widespread use of sorcery, magic, and witchcraft as part of everyday life in the economic system of Babylon.

Three reasons for the destruction of Babylon are given:

1. Wealth became their god.
2. The use of drugs and “magic” as a necessity in everyday life. The implication is that the people were drawn away from God and godliness. Instead of looking to God for provision, they utilized their own methods to accomplish their desires.
3. The murder of people, both holy and common. Throughout history, from the time when Cain slew Able until the end of the tribulation, the ungodly will hate the godly and kill them, often in the name of religion.

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