

The Fall of the Commercial and Political Babylon

Rev. 18

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The understanding of the movement throughout the ages of the Babylonianism system and its final demise is shown by the amount of discussion given to it in Revelation. The "spirit of the world" comes to a head with all aspects of it being judged by the Almighty. The religious side is dealt with in chapter 17 and now the commercial and political part of this evil system will be shown to come to an end. The question that has been debated through time is whether this is a literal city we are being shown. Once again we will let the Bible give us the answer.

Will ancient Babylon actually be rebuilt on the Euphrates, as in Daniel's time? Here are some reasons to believe it will. 1) Ancient Babylon was never suddenly destroyed, as prophesied in Isa. 13:19. 2) The description of literal Babylon by Jeremiah in chapter 51 is very similar to the one given by John in Rev. 18. 3) Babylon is said to be destroyed during the day of the Lord, which is an Old Testament term referring to the Tribulation (Isa. 13:6). 4) According to Isa. 14, Israel will enter into God's rest after Babylon is destroyed. Since that has not yet happened, the event must be yet in the future. 5) Jeremiah predicts that Babylon will drink of the cup of the wrath of God last among all the kingdoms of the earth. 6) The vision of the woman in the ephah (Zech. 5:5-11) indicates a return of wickedness and commerce to Babylon. 8) The description in Rev. 18 is best understood if taken literally.

Dr. Charles Ryrie: "Whether the city will be rebuilt once again on the Euphrates is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the name used is more than a city in these chapters (17-18); it also stands for a system. This is much the same as the way Americans speak of Wall Street or Madison Avenue. They are actual streets, but they also stand for the financial or advertising enterprises."

We will be examining this city in this chapter and are being shown its destruction.

Most scholars agree that Babylon will literally be rebuilt during the tribulation. The Old Testament city of Babylon is mentioned more times in the Bible than any other city with the exception of Jerusalem. It is mentioned no less than 260 times.

Dr. Lehman Strauss on ancient Babylon: "Babylon was founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:8-10). Surviving a series of conflicts, it became one of the most magnificent and luxurious cities in the known world. Superbly constructed, it spread over an area of fifteen square miles, the Euphrates River flowing diagonally across the city. The famous historian Herodotus said the city was surrounded by a wall 350 feet high and 87 feet thick—wide enough for six chariots to drive abreast. Around the top of the wall were 250 watchtowers placed in strategic locations. Outside the huge wall was a large ditch, or moat, which surrounded the city and was kept filled with water from the Euphrates River. The large ditch was meant to serve as an additional protection against attacking enemies, for any attacking enemy would have to cross the body of water first before approaching the great wall.

The cost of constructing the military defense was estimated to be in excess of one billion dollars. When we consider the value of a billion dollars, in those days, plus the fact that it was all built with slave labor, one can imagine something of the wonder and magnificence of this famous city. But in addition to being a bastion for protection, Babylon was a place of beauty. The famous hanging gardens of Babylon are on record yet today as one of the seven wonders of the world. Arranged in an area 400 feet square, and raised in perfectly-cut terraces one above the other, they soared to a height of 350 feet. Viewers could make their way to the top by means of stairways, which were 10 feet wide. Each terrace was covered with a large stone slab topped with a thick layer of asphalt, two courses of brick cemented together, and, finally, plates of lead to prevent any leakage of water. On top of all this was an abundance of rich, fertile earth planted with vines, flowers, shrubs, and trees.

From a distance these hanging gardens gave the appearance of beautiful mountainside, when viewed from the level plains of the valley. The estimated cost of this thing of beauty ran into hundreds of millions of dollars.

The tower of Babel with its temples of worship presented an imposing sight. The tower sat on a base 300 feet in breadth and rose to a height of 300 feet. The one chapel on the top contained an image along reported to be worth \$17,500,000 and sacred vessels, used in worshipping Babylonian gods, estimated at a value of \$200,000,000. In addition to this wealth and grandeur the temple contained the most elaborate and expensive furniture ever to adorn any place of worship."

J. Vernon McGee: "In this day Babylon will dominate and rule the world; she will have the first dictatorship. The stock market will be read from Babylon; Babylon will set the styles for the world a play to be successful will have to be a success in Babylon. And everything in the city is in rebellion against Almighty God and centers in Antichrist. No one dreamed that this great city would be judged. Yet by the time the sun went down, Babylon was nothing but smoldering ruins. When the news goes out the world is stunned, and then begins the wail. The whole world will howl when Babylon goes down."

V1. "After these things": What things? The things recorded in the precious chapter, the destruction of "Mystical Babylon". The one-world church.

"I saw": John is still a spectator.

"Another angel": In chapter 14 we found a series of six angels with this type of identification. He is a divine and supernatural messenger of God but yet nameless and faceless.

"Great power": This is indicating that his authority is great.

"Earth lightened": Again showing the prestige of this angel. (Ezek. 43:2)

V2. "Is fallen": A preliminary announcement of this is found in Chapter 14. This language is written in a way as something that has already happened. God knows the end from the beginning. When He sends truth to us we can be assured that His plans and purposes are going to come to pass.

"Devils": This language indicates the center of demonic activity and rebellion against God is here.

V3. "Have drunk": This is the unholy alliance of governments and big business to this evil therefore denying God's authority. God is going to judge godless commercialism.

V4. "Come out of her": Again this section is describing the evil system that has been offered to mankind down thru the ages. God is using the facts of what is going to happen one day to all evil in this statement to warn those who claim to be His to have no association with the works of this system. Lot's wife literally departed from Sodom but was overtaken with punishment because her heart was not severed from the wickedness of the city.

Eph. 5:11: "and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (express strong disapproval to) them."

II Cor. 6:17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

I Cor. 11:31-32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Sin will be dealt with now or in the end.

V5. "Have reached": God has the record. This evil system which this city is the final headquarters will have reached judgment. God's judgment, thought delayed, will be sure and certain.

V6. "Reward her": God is right and just in what He does. Psa. 137 Ref. Obed. 1:15 "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: they reward shall return upon thine own head."

V7. "Glorified herself": Prosperity blinds reality. This city is blind to what is the end game. Luxury, arrogance, pride, sin, and self-deception was the spirit being walked in. Peace, peace when there is no peace. False belief systems only value what is before them and cannot see destruction. Being on the top of all this world had to offer blinds anyone from making preparations that are necessary to avoid the penalty of living apart from God.

V8. "In one day": The destruction is sudden and will be accomplished by fire. Isa. 63:1-4 is the prophecy of this event. At the 2nd coming of Christ which is at the end of the Tribulation Period the Lord will ascend on this evil system and city and remove its prestige and power.

V9,10. "Lament for her": The kings of the earth hated religious Babylon and joined in her destruction but here they are placed in a place of bewilderment. That which they received revenue from is taken immediately. Final and catastrophic will be the judgment upon this system of evil.

V11-16. "No man buyeth": Suddenly everything comes to a screeching halt. As we look at the list before us it is a list of luxury items and things of necessity. The merchandise covers every phase of business. The articles are for a society accustomed to the better things of the material universe. The list includes people (slaves) and souls. Many have sold their soul (birthright) for a temporary thing losing the eternal fellowship of God through His son Jesus.

V17-19. "One hour": This section deals with those that made the money transporting all the luxury items. Everything in the world was being controlled by this evil system and when God judges it everything is stopped immediately. Those that have trusted in all of this are past feeling uneasy. They are in complete agony.

V20. "Rejoice": Here we find the dividing line being shown. As much as the inhabitants of this world is moaning the loss of the false peace and protection of this evil system there is an equally heartfelt opposite reaction from heaven. The agonies imposed on the followers of Christ through the ages are now avenged.

V21-23. "No more": Six times we find this being said. This sets the fact of the final and complete overthrow of that kingdom of evil which Babylon from its start was the type.

V24 "The blood of prophets and of saints": God's people got rough treatment in this city and God judged it. This is Satan's city, and he was a murderer from the beginning. The story of man's rebellion against God by following the lies of Satan instead of God's truth has been shown to come to a quick end. Psa. 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Edward Gibbon in the Fall and Decline of the Roman Empire: "The five reasons for that civilization withered and died. 1) The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis for human society. 2) Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace. 3) The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting, more brutal, more immoral. 4) The building of great armaments when the real enemy was within—the decay of individual responsibility. 5) The decay of religion; faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, losing power to guide the people.