

# The Doom and Desolation of Works Religion

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*Book of Revelation*

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You will look with me in your Bibles to Revelation 18 and we're going to consider The Doom and Destruction of Works Religion. This is like someone living in a house that's been marked for condemnation, has a big red X on it and they continue to live in it as if the city won't come along eventually and tear it down. It's already been purposed, already been predetermined and foreordained by God. And any that dwell therein will perish along with it. That's really the message here in chapter 18. We'll read the entire chapter and then I'll make some comments, I hope that will be helpful in this regard.

Revelation 18:1,

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!

for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

A very gruesome description but nonetheless, written here for our admonition and warning and particularly for those who yet may be in false religion in spiritual Babylon, works religion, a religion that glorifies herself at it says in verse 7. There are little hints all throughout this portion that any that are given some discernment might know of what it speaks.

So, first of all we see here the wickedness of spiritual Babylon and the Judge himself that comes to destroy this Babylon. In verse 1, the Scripture says, “After these things I saw another angel,” and when you look at the description that follows, we have to believe that this was another kind of angel, an angel of a different kind. The word “angel” actually

means “messenger.” And the way that we read this description, here, I believe is none other than Christ himself because Christ is the Judge and when he comes, it will be to destroy all that is false. And any type of false worship, any kind of foundation or hope that is built upon man’s works and that’s what we really have a picture of here. Self-glorying in man and what he does stands opposed to Christ and as we’ve seen in other portions here in Revelation, will most certainly know the wrath of the Lamb.

When I say another kind of messenger came down from heaven, this is talking about Christ coming down in judgment. He’s seated there upon his throne, he’s at the right hand of the Majesty on High and he’s set there having accomplished a work of salvation for his people. But when that last one is called out, then he will come in judgment and I believe that’s what we have depicted here, this final judgment. Have you ever found yourself wondering, “How long can things continue to worsen when it comes to religion?” I know that everybody’s worried about the state of the economy and politics and all these other things, but those that are the Lord’s even as we read there in 2 Peter 2, are like Lot that live on this earth with wickedness and false worship all around them. And our righteous souls, and it’s not because of anything inherent in us, but made righteous by that work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we’re vexed. I don’t know about you, but when the subject of religion comes up whether it’s in the office or riding in a car with somebody, you just kind of get tense, you start thinking, “O boy, I’ve got to say something because I know where this is going.” But those that are caught up in it, don’t see the danger of it. In fact, they would be very shocked if you were to describe it as being as evil as pornography or as sodomy, but it is. In fact, our Lord condemned it so when he said in Matthew 11 that it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for those self-righteous villages and towns where they would have nothing to do with him.

So, a very wicked and desperate picture is painted for us. But when you look at it, again, it’s all about false religion, it’s all about men having forsaken the one true God. And we can see the blindness of men in the fact that they can hold in their hands a King James Bible and read the Scriptures but never use them to glorify Christ. They’ll glorify their profession, they’ll glorify their projects, they’ll glorify their ministries but they will not glorify Christ because the whole thing is established in idolatrous worship. When you look at verse 2 and how the Lord describes the false worship, again, it’s a shock to some to hear the Lord compare it with the worship of devils but that’s how it’s described. If you look over in John 8:44, we’re talking about some of the most moral men that lived upon the earth and that opposed the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s where he says of them though that you are of your father, the devil. They constantly question him, wanting some more proof for who he said he was. You can see their attitude when the Lord spoke of them as being sinners in verse 41, “Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.” So, these are men, religious leaders, that boast of serving God and yet their habitation is a habitation of Satan, of the devil. In verse 44, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

So, this is very clearly the same thing that we have here in Revelation 18 in verse 2, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and has become the habitation of devils.” It was fallen even before its destruction described here. It’s like we talk about men, when they fall in sin they fall because they are fallen, they are fallen creatures. They are what they are in Adam and yet, what men uphold as true and is good, the Lord here describes is, “the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” I think of what our Lord said about a house being cleaned where the spirit goes out and wanders. It’s talking about what religion does to men. It cleans up the outward, it makes them look moral, it makes them look upright because now they start to pray and they start to read Scripture, they start attending places of worship and yet the message is one of righteousness that they work out. And they don’t see the evil of it. They believe they are really serving God and they’ve turned over a new leaf and men applaud them for it. They’ll bring them up front and have them give testimonies of the change that is taking place: they’ve stopped drinking, stopped smoking, stopped chewing and stopped going with girls that do. This is the religion of the day. Verse 3 describes it as a drunkenness.

They are drunk and it says, “all nations.” You see, this is what gets people when you start pointing out the error of their worship. They begin to reason, “Well, if it was wrong, why do we have so many?” You know, we’ve got preachers standing up and talking about their worldwide ministries that they have. Mary was watching, The Voice last night and they had one of the singers there that purported to be the son of a preacher and he was proud to announce who his dad was. I’d never heard of the man but I Googled him. I’m sitting there with my laptop and I Googled him to see and sure enough, this man has a radio ministries, tv and all these things but it’s all self-glorifying. We dare not be fooled just because people throughout the world are following these men and this religion. If it’s works, it’s false. If it’s founded upon what man must do either by way of his will or his worship in commending himself to God, it’s false.

But it’s a drunkenness. You might as well try to reason with a drunk as to reason with somebody that is caught up with their false profession. And that’s how Scripture describes it, “For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” You think of fornication, it’s a spiritual adultery, it’s an allurements which allures all sorts of men into it and it’s sustained by great wealth and luxury. This is what impresses people as well, the amount of money that’s available to support it. Who would have thought that we live in a day when a little group grows from ten people meeting in an apartment into a congregation that now has 8-10,000 people attending and all kinds of money. They’ve put up a multi-million dollar building and I believe all of this is what’s being described here in Revelation 18, the merchandising of the gold and the silver, the craftsmen. You think about the number of people that have the contracts that support it and are involved with the building up of it and pledge allegiance to it. But the Scripture calls it a fornication and regardless of the amount of wealth and luxury that it exudes, all of it is under God’s condemnation. That ought to be clear to us when we read what Peter wrote that it’s not by silver and gold that we’re redeemed but by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that men today will take and try to build temples and boast of “the silver and gold and precious stones and the pearls and the fine linen, the purple, the silk, the scarlet,

all the manner of vessels of ivory, all manner vessels of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble.”

I had to visit one of these places here in Shreveport this week for a business call and it's been a long time since I've been in one of these places of worship but it was ornate when I walked in. It's just unbelievable how much money is put in to make it look majestic and to give people a sense or an aura that somehow God is present there. And all kinds of pictures and icons and things on the walls that are man-made and nothing but idolatry. But nonetheless, it's a depiction of what is described here. Don't be deceived by the abundance of her delicacies because whatever is of the flesh is flesh and that's really what it's designed to do, to appeal to the flesh. We dare not think that if we just build a bigger building or one that's a little bit more ornate that somehow because of that the Lord's sheep will be drawn. We could be meeting at the end of the road in a cornfield and if the Lord has his sheep and the Gospel is preached there, that's where the Lord is going to draw his sheep. It's not going to be based upon the outward. So, this is how spiritual Babylon is described.

The second thing I would have you see there, right in the middle, this is just like when we read some of the prophets in the Old Testament, you look for a little window of light because it's so dark and desperate and you're thinking, "Where's the Lord? Where's the mercy?" Well, here in verse 4, "I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her my people." Here's a very real and true statement that gives me comfort and that is that the Lord will not bring it to final judgment or condemnation until every one of his own is brought out. So, what it says there is that there are some of his sheep that may still be in this false religion that the Lord will effectually call out. They're not going to stay there when the Lord opens their eyes and you stop and look at your own testimony, if the Lord's taught you. We were raised in darkness, that's how all of us are born. We're all born in this world what we call free-willers. We worship ourselves. We attempt to approach God based upon our works and our will until the Lord shows us our utter desperate lost estate. And when he does, and opens the eyes to Christ, you will come out. He will draw you out.

I'll have us go back to 2 Peter 2 because that's really the message that we have there of Lot. A lot of people condemn Lot for living in Sodom and Gomorrah but the Lord's favor was upon him and the Lord did not destroy that city until he had brought Lot out. When you go back and read the story, literally an angel had to take him by the hand and draw him forth because he lingered. There are attachments that we have in false religion: people, acquaintances, and all sorts of things but when the Lord teaches you, there's a separating out. There's a coming out. You cannot continue to identify with it and that's the verse that I want you to see, particularly verse 9 and what we read. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Every one that the Lord has redeemed he must deliver. He must bring them out. He will bring them out. He'll cause their eyes to be opened to behold the glory of Christ. And, once your eyes are open to behold the glory of Christ, none of that outward

merchandising of gold and silver, precious stones, the masses, the people, can keep you. It's like the story in Pilgrim's Progress that once the Spirit began to draw Christian in that story, he literally plugged his ears and ran toward the Wicked Gate. His family crying out after him, but he knew that he had to get out. He was following the Lord's Spirit and leadership which eventually drew him to the cross. There's a drawing. There is a movement. There's an urgency that I believe the Lord puts on the heart of his people when it's time to bring them out. That's what we look for. That's what we pray for. But at the same time, we can never go back. Those who do continue, I'm concerned, will most certainly perish in their sins. Again, they're like drunks, you can't shake them, you can't talk them into salvation. It's what it is.

In verses 5 down to 19, we see the extent of the destruction and desolation. We see the Lord here speaking of those sins that have reached unto heaven. And notice, verse 5, "God hath remembered her iniquities." So, we're talking about people and souls here of men that have not been redeemed, otherwise God would not remember their iniquities. But of those for whom Christ died, he said, "Their iniquities I remember no more." So, very clearly there's a description here. You say, "What about those for whom Christ did not pay the debt?" Well, they might be the most moral and religious in the world, but without a satisfaction, without that blood sacrifice that takes away their sin, they will for eternity suffer condemnation because nothing can satisfy a holy God.

And God purposes their destruction. I remember back when I was in college sitting in classes and having arguments and debates, "Well, does God really predestine people to hell?" And people, professors and others, they shy away from that, "Now, God wouldn't actually do that." Well, here very clearly, we see that it is the Lord that saves but it is the Lord that condemns and those that are the Lord's will say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

If you look over in Jude verse 4, just before Revelation, we read Jude writing this, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." So, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. That's a blindness, a judicial blindness that the Lord has brought upon many. He did it with Israel of old and it's his just right to do it today. He doesn't have to say salvation is of the Lord. And so, their reward will be double unto her works. You know, you stop and think about it, how brazen men are in their works. How proud they are of it and won't let go of it. You can't talk them out of it. And so, the Lord says, "Alright, if you want to continue and expect to stand before me based upon your works, I will show you what true holiness is. I will show you what my true justice is. That wrath that was poured upon my Son will be eternally poured upon you. There will be no purgatory, there won't be any statute of limitations to where after a while you'll be brought out. We're talking about eternal condemnation."

Again, when you talk in this manner to people and loved ones that are caught up in works religion, they're shocked at you. They think you're warped in your thinking. They will think you've gone mad because you describe it in these terms but all you can do is tell

them, “Read the Scriptures. Read Revelation 18. Read what God himself says about condemnation that awaits.” Notice in verse 6 if you like to look for key words, “unto her double according to her works.”

There’s no man or sinner that will ever be saved by their works but there is a multitude of sinners that will be condemned eternally for their works. I think of Matthew 7:20-21 where many shall say in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not done many mighty works in your name?” People get, again, deceived and drunken in their thinking and that’s part of the spiritual fornication because the name of Christ is attached to it. And they think, “Well, God must approve of it because look how prosperous it is.” There is a lot that is being done in the name of Christ today that is not Christ’s work. Therein is the deception.

And so, there will be “a rewarding double according to her works in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.” It’s as if the Lord says, “You want to present yourself before me based upon your works? Have at it. I’ll give you a lifetime.” People sacrifice, they go overseas, they come back and are lauded for being missionaries. Carrying the “Gospel” to dark lands and yet it’s a false message.

Here’s the point of it, verse 7, you say, “Boil it down. What are you saying? What’s the essence of it?” Look at verse 7, “how much she hath glorified herself.” That’s really the sum and substance, the difference between the Gospel which glorifies Christ alone and man’s religion, which glorifies itself. It puts man somewhere in the mix and there are a lot of promises made to people, “If you’ll just make your decision for Jesus and come to him, he’ll bless you.” The message of health, wealth and prosperity when you read that, verse 7 says, “and live deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.” It’s almost for every ounce of comfort that you’ve found in the material and the physical blessings double by way of sorrow, “for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen and am no widow and shall see no sorrow.” You think about the number of people who have gone to their death under a false hope believing that somehow their life or something in it will recommend them to God. I’ve heard some, again, you can’t shake them out of it, you can’t talk them out of it but they talk about their faith that, “At least I have my faith and this is what I believe will be satisfactory to God.” It’s not our faith that’s the Savior. Faith didn’t die on the cross. Faith is not the sacrifice. Christ is, and that’s where we look.

What I want you to see here, though, is the difference between false repentance and true repentance because we read here of mourning. As I read down through this you can see in verse 8, “therefore shall her plagues come in one day. Death and mourning and famine and she shall be utterly burnt with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.” That’s why I believe the angel, in other words, messenger mentioned in verse 1, is none other than Christ himself because verse 1, that angel is the one that comes in judgment. And here it says, “The Lord God judgeth her.” God has put all judgment in the hands of his Son. The Father judges no man, but put all judgment into his hands. So, this is the one with whom they have to do. And yet, the bewailing, it’s a lot like with Esau who lost the birthright. He wept tears but they weren’t tears of repentance. It was a bewailing of the loss of that privilege. That’s all.

And that's what I see all the way down through here. The bewailing, look in verse 9. It says, "the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and have lived deliciously with her." That's talking about the politics, the politicians, the church-states that exist around the world. "Shall bewail her and lament for her when they shall see the smoke of her burning." And their crying is for the loss and you see, even in verse 11, "the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore." You think about the, and I don't know if there's a figure even or how to figure it, but you think about how much money is spent to promote false religion today, the billions of dollars and to support those who traffic it. When it talks about merchants, they're trafficking her wares. I believe that's symbolic of missionaries, of their evangelists that go forth to set up their wares throughout the world and entice others to participate in their sinful pleasure.

But it's a false repentance and will there be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in hell? Absolutely. But it won't be over remorse or repentance for sin with regard to Christ but it'll be in anger. The gnashing of teeth will be in anger over the fact that this Sovereign Lord God, the Lamb, has all the glory. That's where really the anger will be fully manifest. Today, people can get away from it. If they don't like the message that exalts Christ, they'll go down the road and mingle in with congregations and people and feel comfortable, "Ah, here's some fellowship. At least here there's a oneness of mind as far as what they believe." And yet, it's again, it's a haven for attracting those that are drunk with the wine of fornication. They've been allured. Such will, in the day of judgment, not be able to escape.

That's who's described there if you look at verse 13: the cinnamon, the odors, the ointments, those are all things that were used for false worship. But you look down there and the last thing says, "and souls of men." That's really what is at heart here, the souls of men. I believe any that are taught of the Lord, that's what weighs on our minds. I know as I preach and as this message goes forth, that's the one thing that is of concern to me, the glory of God, the glory of Christ, but the souls of men. As Paul said, to preach so as to be free of the blood of men. The only way to do that is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ before their eyes.

Well, the final thing that I would bring out and there's a lot here to say but, the completeness of God's justice when he acts, this is very much an act of justice as we saw in verse 8, "for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." We're talking about a strength that's inflexible. We're talking about a righteousness that is inflexible and if he spared not his Son but delivered him up, to freely give all things to those for whom Christ died, how great then must be that judgment for those who are outside of Christ. The Lord will judge inflexibly; his justice is inflexible. You don't have a holiness to answer to his holiness apart from what Christ did.

And yet, it says here in verse 20 there will be a "Rejoicing over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." When you think about how much persecution and bloodshed that there has been down through history against those who have taken a clear stand for the Gospel, for the one work of the Lord Jesus



Christ that he accomplished, how can we today, living in a certain measure of freedom, ever trivialize that or take it for granted. The prophets, those that have gone before, the holy angels rejoice in heaven for God having avenged this upon her. When we read verse 24, “in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth.” That’s something to take very seriously. Go back to the Apostles when the Lord said that they would bear his cross, they did; every one of them laid down their life for Christ and for what his death accomplished. Today, we have some that say, “Well, we shouldn’t be making such a big deal about it. You know, is it really that serious?” Yes, it is. Anything that has to do with the glory of Christ and his honor is very serious. No lightness, we dare not low the manna and consider it a light thing to do so.

You can see just how great is that destruction, so great that it says in verse 22 that “the voice of musicians and pipers and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee.” Isn’t that what really false religion likes built up around music, entertainment and yet there’s a day when it will be silenced. “No craftsman of whatsoever craft he be shall be found any more in thee.” The number of people that have taken their talents that God has given them, instead of glorifying Christ with it, they’ve promoted false religion, building up these temples.

I remember a friend of mine that before the Lord taught him, he was involved with putting up a number of these church buildings and I remember driving down the road with him and he’d drive by and say, “I had a hand in building that. I had a hand in building this.” And he’d say, “I can’t tell you how many times I would just love to just go and take a match and burn them all to the ground.” But he said, “the Lord will do it one day.” I think we all look back and think about how we put our hand to this merchandising and, you know, I do. I think about the years the Lord let me go for a while but I’m thankful I was one of those Lots that he brought out.

You can take people and shake them all you want to try to reason with them but unless the Lord is pleased to draw them out, the condemnation is certain. Whatever light there is, it says in verse 23, that’s not true light, that’s just the light of a candle. That’s what men call light. All of that will be done “for by thy sorceries,” you can see how God described it, sorcery, bewitched. Paul said, “Who hath bewitched you?” When he spoke even to the Galatians. These are places where the Gospel was preached and yet there was a turning from it and how serious a matter it is.