

FALL OF BABYLON AND ITS LAMENT

(Rev 18:9-16) 05-17-20

Grace Bible Church, Gillette, Wyoming

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I. MONARCHS' LAMENT (9-10)

A. Monarchs' Lament Over Babylon's Fall (9)

1. Kings of the Earth -

a. Antichrist's Rule - By this time, the monarchs or "**kings**" have been presented in the book of Revelation under the Antichrist's rule (Rev 17:17).

b. Religious and Commercial Rule - It begins with the Revived Roman Empire and expands all over the "**earth**." By the last half of the Tribulation the Antichrist has all religious, political, commercial, and economical power and rule.

c. Some Unwilling Subjects - Though they have no choice but to be a part of Babylon's Commercial System, not all the kings will be willing subjects. For we read in Dan 11:40-45 that kings from the south (Egypt), north (Russia), and perhaps the east (China) will initially come to collide with the Antichrist. Perhaps this will happen on their way to the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:12).

2. Committed Immorality - In Rev 17:2, the kings will commit **immorality** ("spiritual adultery") with Babylon's false religion and with the worship of the Antichrist. We observe that these same kings are committing spiritual adultery with Babylon's Commercial System (cf. Rev 18:3). By the way, this does not rule out rampant sexual **sensuality**.

3. Weep and Lament

a. Weep - The kings will not be shedding crocodile tears when they see Babylon burning. They will "weep" which is the Greek word *klaiō* and means strong inner emotion of grief and tears (Mar 5:38-39; Luk 6:21). It is used by John in Rev 5:4-5 and 4 times in this chapter (Rev 18:9, 11, 15, 19).

b. Lament - The kings did not merely weep, they "**lamented**" (*koptō*) which means to strike as in beating one's breast out of a strong expression of anguish.

B. Monarchs Declare Woe Over Babylon (10)

1. Stand at a Distance - The kings observe Babylon's fall from a **distance** in order to escape its judgment. Because they were a part of Babylon's Commercial System, they **fear the same torment** and do not want to share in it.

2. Declare Woes

a. God's judgment - A "**woe**" in Scripture usually refers to God's judgment that is brought upon the guilty (Isa 10:5; Jer 48:46; 50:27; Mat 11:21; Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 12:12).

b. Expression of Grief - At times, a "woe" is an expression of grief from those who witness God's holiness and judgment (Isa 6:5; Luk 21:23).

c. Groups Declare Woes - The monarchs (Rev 18:10), the merchants (Rev 18:16), and the maritime industry (Rev 18:19) all express their grief and horror by declaring woes in regard to the fall of Babylon. Some have described this section of Scripture as three funeral dirges.

3. Babylon, the Strong City - Babylon was called **strong** by men because the **city** had endured the judgments up to that point. But now it has fallen by hand of One stronger.

4. Judgment in One Hour - The phrase "**one hour**" could refer to speedy judgment or it may be a literal time period.

II. MERCHANTS' LAMENT (11-16)

A. Merchants' Lament Over Babylon's Fall (11)

1. Merchants of the Earth - A "**merchant**" (*emporos*, Eng. "*emporium*") is not a local businessperson but one who travels (by land - Eze 17:4; or by sea - 1Ki 10:15, 28) and deals with wholesale trade. These would be merchants from all over the "**earth**."

2. Weep and Mourn - Like the rulers of the earth, the merchants also **wept** (*klaiō*). In addition, they mourned over the fall of Babylon. To “**mourn**” (*pentheō*) means to have great sorrow as a result of some condition or circumstance (cf. Mar 16:10).
 3. No Emporium For Cargo - The reason that they were weeping and mourning was not because the judgment of God fell upon the world, but because now that Babylon fell, there was no emporium to buy and sell their “**cargoes**” (*gomos - loads and freight on a ship*).
- B. Merchants’ Cargoes End (12-13)
1. Not Fulfilled by Historical Rome - Though the following are examples of the luxury and splendor of the Roman Empire, it does not mean that Rev 18 was fulfilled in the historical Roman Empire. Many kings and kingdoms in history (Nebuchadnezzar, Saddam Hussein, etc.) displayed luxury and splendor and could be used as examples. The following arguments suggest that the historical Roman Empire did not fulfill Rev 18.
 - a. It is extremely difficult to attempt to identify the Antichrist in historical Rome.
 - b. The wealth of Rome does not compare to the Antichrist’s control of world-wide wealth and commerce.
 - c. The Roman Empire did not fall in a short period of time (Rom 18:10, 17, 19).
 - d. The fall of the Roman Empire was not followed by Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-20).
 2. Precious Metals and Gems
 - a. “Gold, Silver, Precious Gems, and Pearls” - **Gold** was not only a source of revenue but also a source of a life of extravagance with gold ceilings, shoe buckles, and jewelry (Baker Exegetical Commentary).
 - b. *At that time there was in Rome a passion for silver dishes. [Rich] women would bathe only in silver tubs. Even generals on the field insisted upon dining on silver dishes. Julius Caesar gave Servilia a single pearl costing more than \$18,000.* (Mounce).
 3. Plush Fabrics and Clothing
 - a. “Fine linen, Purple, Silk, and Scarlet” - *A linen tunic from a famous garment center like Scythopolis could cost \$280,000* (Baker Exegetical Commentary).
 - b. **Purple** was imported primarily from Phoenicia, where the expensive dye was extracted a drop at a time from a shellfish called the murex. **Silk** came from the distant land of China and was extremely expensive. Yet it was imported in such quantities that Josephus reports how the triumphant army appeared before Vespasian and Titus arrayed in silken garments (Mounce.)
 4. Premium Decorations
 - a. “Citron and Other Woods, Ivory, Bronze, Iron, and Marble” - **Citron wood** was an expensive dark wood imported from North Africa and used for costly furniture and inlay work. Its unusual ornamental veining resembled at times the eyes of the peacock’s tail or the stripes or spots of wild animals. Seneca is reported to have had three hundred tables of citrus wood with ivory feet (ibid.).
 - b. *Wealthy Romans ate from ivory plates. Ornaments of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble decorated the homes of the rich* (ibid.).
 5. Perfumes and Aromatic Substances
 - a. “Cinnamon, Spice, Incense, Perfume, and Frankincense” - **Cinnamon** was an aromatic spice imported from South China (ibid.).
 - b. *The prostitute in Prov 7:17 perfumed her bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon (cf. Song 4:14). The word translated spice is an Eastern perfume used to scent the hair. Incense was burned for its fragrant odor. Myrrh was used medicinally and as a perfume* (ibid.).
 6. Pantry and Produce Commodities
 - a. “Wine, Olive Oil, Fine Flour, Wheat, and Fruit” - Rev 6:6 described the special care needed to preserve **wheat, barley, and olive oil** for survival during the

Tribulation judgments. Nevertheless, Babylon was decadently flourishing in these commodities.

b. *For the most part, these were staples and not especially extravagant items. However, Rome was notorious for its extravagant banquets. It was said that Vitellius in one year spent the equivalent of \$20 million on food, primarily on lavish banquets. They would import food from all parts of the empire, serving expensive delicacies like the tongues of nightingales or the breasts of doves* (Baker Exegetical Commentary).

7. Pastoral and Entertainment Animals

a. “Cattle, Sheep, Horses and Chariots” - The **cattle** could refer to food and dairy products. However, these animals may have been a source of wealth and status.

b. *The best of [horses] were used for chariot races, incredibly popular throughout the empire. They were also needed by the army and for work. Thus, there was a huge trade in horses. The carriages here are not so much the racing or military chariots (see 9:9 for that) but the horse-drawn, four-wheeled carriages used for transport. The wealthy had ornate carriages, often covered with silver or ivory* (ibid.).

8. People and Human Trafficking

a. “Slaves and Human Lives” - *This is a vivid commentary on the social conditions of the day. Slave traders regarded their human cargo as so much merchandise to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. It is estimated that there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire* (Mounce).

b. *The final item on the list, souls of men [‘human lives’], is an old Hebrew phrase that, according to Swete, means little more than human livestock. It may, however, refer to something even more sinister than the regular slave trade* (ibid.).

c. Perhaps it refers to torturous entertainment that will be imposed upon Christians who do not take the mark of the Beast.

C. Merchants’ Clientele Ends (14)

1. Luxury and Splendor

a. **Luxury** - When Babylon falls, so will its life of luxury and splendor. “**Luxury**” is the Greek word *liparos* and literally means “oily” or “fatty”. It depicts that which is sleek, well-greased, ease of life, comfortable, and costly. Babylon’s wealth will give many a luxurious and sumptuous living.

b. **Splendor** - “**Splendor**” (*lampros*) literally means bright. Therefore, Babylon had led a life of glitter, luster, and grandeur.

c. **Passed Away** - When Babylon falls, its pomp, pageantry, and production will “**pass away**.”

2. **No Longer Find** - When Babylon and its great Commercial System fall, the buyers and clientele of the merchants will **no longer** be **found** (*emphatic double negative - ou, mē, i.e. never*).

D. Merchants Weep Over Babylon’s Fall (15)

1. **Became Rich From Her** - Kings and merchants loved Babylon because Babylon made them **rich**. Therefore, it is reiterated that they “**wept and mourn**.”

2. **Fear of Torment** - Like the kings, they stood at a distance for **fear of torment**. In order to become rich, the kings and merchants had to participate in the sins of Babylon. If they shared in Babylon’s sins, then they would share Babylon’s judgment. They had to receive the mark of the beast and worship the Antichrist. Otherwise, they would not have been able to buy or sell (Rev 13:17).

E. Merchants Declare Woe Over Babylon (16)

1. **Declare Woe** - Like the kings, the merchants also declared the **woes** upon Babylon.

2. **The Great City** - The phrase “the **great city**” as well as the other five references concerning the “city” (Rev 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21) suggest that Babylon will indeed be a literal city. Many hold the view that the city will be the rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates.

3. Wealthy Babylon - Here, the “great city” refers to and reiterates Babylon’s wealth, **“clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls”** (cf. Rev 17:4; 18:12).

III. OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

A. Future Rebuilding of the City of Babylon

1. Ron Rhodes, in his book, “the New Babylon,” gives compelling reasons why a future city of Babylon will be rebuilt for the Antichrist’s capital.
 - a. *How is it feasible that Babylon will be rebuilt during the end times? To this question, I can offer several observations.*
 - b. *First and foremost, recall that when the late Saddam Hussein was in power, he spent more than one billion dollars in oil money to enhance the city of Babylon. In his case, a billion dollars accomplished the revival of the city in rather rapid fashion.*
 - c. *Second, when the antichrist comes into power during the tribulation period, he will have access not only to unlimited funding, but to an unlimited workforce. What the antichrist wants, the antichrist will get. He will make Hussein’s efforts seem like child’s play.*
 - d. *Third, it is quite possible that the oil in Iraq will be the primary source of funds for the rebuilding of Babylon. It seems that an oil-rich Iraq is part of God’s blueprint for the end times. As one commentator put it, It’s no accident that Babylon is in Iraq, a nation with such staggering oil reserves. God said that Babylon will be rebuilt as a great commercial center in the end times.*
 - e. *Babylon’s appeal to the antichrist may relate to the city’s prime location---it is in close proximity to other oil-rich nations, such as Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As prophecy commentator Nathan Jones says, It would be very smart to have a capital in the oil fields where you can defend it well. The antichrist will be able to control immense wealth and power---up to two-thirds of the remaining oil on the planet. It is hard to think of a better place to establish an economic and commercial center.*
 - f. *[If this is the case, then Babylon on the Euphrates is just waiting to be rebuilt]. The antichrist will have the power and resources to easily rebuild Babylon in a quick, efficient manner. It’s on the horizon.*
2. This is prophecy and therefore it will be fulfilled in one sense or another. The important question remains, “Which side are you on? Are you on the side of the resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or are you on the side of materialism and the love of money under the influence of Satan and the Antichrist??

B. Future Weeping of the Inhabitants of Babylon

1. Those who share in Babylon’s worship of the Antichrist and Commercial System will weep when Babylon falls. They will weep because their luxuries and livelihood will come crashing down.
2. However, because they will have already rejected Christ for the Antichrist and his city, their eternal destiny will be sealed in eternal punishment, which includes weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:44-51; 25:30).
3. Jesus said, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” (Mar 8:36).
4. Come to Christ before it is too late.



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EVENTS IN REVELATION

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|---|---|--|------------|-----------------------|
|  |  |  | | |
| | | RELIGIOUS SYSTEM | | ANTICHRIST'S RELIGION |
| | | COMMERCIAL SYSTEM | | COMMERCIAL SYSTEM |
| Church Age <i>(Eph 3:4-6)</i> | Church in Heaven <i>(1Th 4:14-17)</i> | 7-Year Tribulation <i>(Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24-27)</i> | | |