

The Final Financial Crisis

Text: Revelation 18:1-24

Introduction: Review

1. Revelation 17-18 give more detail on the destruction of Babylon as anticipated in Rev. 14:8 and announced in Rev. 16:19. Mystery Babylon is comprised of two elements – religious (Rev. 17) and political/economic (Rev. 18). “Babylon of the future will be the center for both false religion and world economic prosperity.” (R. L. Thomas) These chapters describe in greater detail the end times kingdom of Antichrist and the destruction of that kingdom.
2. In both chapters we see a **city** and a **system**. In Revelation 17 we have the apostate church (system) centered in Rome (city). In Revelation we have the financial hub of Antichrist’s kingdom (system) apparently also in the same location (city). It would appear from a comparison of 17:4 and 18:16 that both religious and economic Babylon are in the same city. Wherever the Geographic location may be, we know that there will be a city that functions as the financial headquarters of the Antichrist’s kingdom and that it will be destroyed by the outpouring of God’s wrath from heaven.
3. Religious Babylon (chapter 17) aids Antichrist in his rise to power in the first half of the tribulation but is then destroyed by the Antichrist and the ten-kingdom confederacy (17:12, 16-17) at the half way point when Antichrist declares himself as god and demands universal worship (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Political and economic Babylon is destroyed at the end of the 7-year period by God Himself (18:8) when the 7th vial judgment is poured out (16:17-19).
4. For this lesson we will study the fall of Babylon in 5 sections.

I. THE DECLARATION OF BABYLON’S FALL (VS. 1-3)

A. The Messenger (Vs. 1)

1. The Angel’s Might (Vs. 1a) There are several mighty angels in Revelation who play a special role in relation to the revealing of God’s truth:
 - a. The seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 5:1-2).
 - b. The sweet and sour scroll (Rev. 10:1-2).
2. The Angel’s Light (Vs. 1b)
 - a. The angel radiates a glorious light that illuminates the earth.
 - b. He comes from the glorious presence of God and shines forth the glory of God.

B. The Message (Vs. 2-3)

The angel proclaims...

1. The Reality of Babylon’s Fall (Vs. 2)
 - a. “is fallen is fallen” = the word ‘fallen’ is repeated to emphasize the reality of what has happened.
 - b. “is become the habitation” = the ruined city becomes a devil infested place.
 - i. “the habitation of devils” = demons will be at home here
 - ii. “the hold of every foul spirit” = the word ‘hold’ means ‘prison’ and is translated as such 36 times in the New

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- Testament. Babylon becomes a place of incarceration for evil spirits.
- iii. “a cage of very unclean and hateful bird” = also a reference to demonic spirits. Christ used the fowls of the air to describe evil spirits in the Gospels (E.g. Mark 4:4, 32).
2. The Reasons for Babylon’s Fall (Vs. 3)
 - a. Her intoxication of the nations (Vs. 3a)
 - i. The universal influence of the Antichrist’s world system is emphasized repeatedly in these two chapters. All nations are perverted and polluted (See Vs. 23).
 - ii. The world system under the dominion of Satan from the time sin entered the world has had an evil sway over men and nations.
 - iii. Her evil is likened to wine and fornication. The word ‘wrath’ points to the judgment of God that is kindled against her debauchery.
 - b. Her immorality with the rulers (Vs. 3b). Earth’s rulers commit spiritual whoredom with this world system. They cooperate with it and promote it. This is the danger of politics for a Christian! It would take tremendous Christian courage and character for a Christian MP to not compromise with the world system.
 - c. Her influence with the merchants (Vs. 3c). The earths business people benefit financially doing trade with Babylon. “The great merchants of this world, the secular business corporations, support the Babylonian system and are not in submission to God and His Word. The godly, upright business man is the exception, not the rule.” (David Cloud)

II. THE SEPARATION FROM BABYLON’S FALL (VS. 4-8)

A. The Command to God’s Saints (Vs. 4-5)

1. The Principle in the Command (Vs. 4a)
 - a. “Come out of her, my people” = the principle of separation. This is a call to the tribulation saints to be separated from the city and the system of Antichrist.
 - b. Application: Separation has been God’s principle for His people from the beginning.
 - i. Illustration: Abraham – “*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, **Get thee out** of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*” (Gen. 12:1-2)
 - ii. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 – Come out and be separate!
 - iii. 1 John 2:15-17 – Love not the world!
 - iv. Illustration: A boat in water. The boat is in the water but the water must not come into the boat.
2. The Purposes of the Command (Vs. 4b-5)
 - a. To not be a partaker of her sins (Vs. 4b, 5). Compromise with the world leads to participation with the world! Babylon’s sins are

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pictured as being so great that they are like bricks stacked on top of each other up to the height of heaven itself. The picture is drawn from historic Babylon – “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, **whose top may reach unto heaven;**” (Gen. 11:4) By the end of the tribulation, the wickedness of this world’s system will reach its climax and God says enough!

- b. To not be a partaker of her plagues (Vs. 4c) The plagues are a reference to the bowl judgments of chapter 16 and especially the seventh bowl (16:17-21).

B. The Condemnation of Babylon’s Sin (Vs. 6-8)

Her judgment will be...

1. Severe (Vs. 6) The word ‘double’ occurs 3 times. God is longsuffering but when His wrath is unleashed, it will be a fearful and awesome thing.
2. Suitable (Vs. 7) God’s judgment, whilst severe, will be according to His perfect justice. It will be “according to her works” (6). It will be “How much...so much” (7).
3. Swift (Vs. 8) The swiftness of God’s judgment answers her complacency and false sense of security described in Vs. 7. She will receive the very things she thought she would avoid. Because God’s judgment is delayed, men feel it will never come. But when God’s judgment comes, it comes suddenly and powerfully.

III. THE LAMENTATION OF BABYLON’S FALL (VS. 9-19)

There are three groups of people who mourn over Babylon’s downfall:

A. The Monarchs (Vs. 9-10)

1. “committed fornication” = their immoral relationship with Antichrist’s kingdom. God views affection for this world as spiritual adultery (James 4:4).
2. “lived deliciously” = the word ‘deliciously’ means luxuriously, extravagantly. It is translated ‘delicacies’ in Vs. 3. Speaks of a pleasure oriented, lustful manner of life. It speaks of hedonism, that is, the belief that pleasure or happiness is the highest good; devotion to pleasure as a way of life.
3. “bemoan...lament” = description of deep sorrow and mourning. For the earth dwellers who have made the kingdom of Antichrist the center of their hopes and dreams, they are absolutely shattered when it is destroyed.
4. Note: For the unsaved man, all his hopes, dreams and joys are bound up in this world’s system and when that is taken away from him, he feels his life has all but ended.

B. The Merchants (Vs. 11-17a)

“The wail of the merchants is more extended than that of the kings and mariners. It is a picture of overwhelming sadness.” (Thomas)

1. Their Merchandise (Vs. 11-14)
There is a list of 28 luxury items that fall into some broad industry categories. There is...
 - a. The Jewelry Industry – “gold, silver, precious stones, pearls”
 - b. The Textile Industry – “fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet”

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- c. The Furniture Industry – “all thyine wood, vessels of ivory, all manner vessels of most precious wood” Thyine wood was used by the Romans for decorative cabinets and other luxury furnishings (Wiersbe).
 - d. The Construction Industry – “brass, iron and marble”
 - e. The Herb and Spice Industry – “cinnamon”
 - f. The Cosmetic and Perfume Industries – “cinnamon, odours, ointments, frankincense”
 - g. The Wine & Liquor Industries – “wine”
 - h. The Hospitality Industry – “oil, and fine flour, and wheat”
 - i. The Agricultural Industry – “beasts, sheep, horses”
 - j. The Transportation and defense Industries – “chariots”
 - k. The Slavery Industry – “slaves, and souls of men” During John’s day, “one third of Rome’s population was enslaved and it was not unusual for 10,000 human beings to be auctioned off in one day in the great slave markets of the Empire. There were probably over 50 million slaves in the Roman Empire at that time.” (Wiersbe) Slavery still exists in the modern world (e.g. human trafficking). The International Labor Organization estimates that, by their definitions, over 40 million people are in some form of slavery today. For example, 4.8 million persons are in forced sexual exploitation. Most tragically, Babylon trades in man’s souls. She promises salvation but delivers damnation.
 - l. Ironside: “She has made merchandise of the bodies and souls of her dupes, who, turning away from the rich grace revealed in the gospel, have sought to purchase what God was freely offering, only to find at last that they have sold their souls to a cruel and avaricious system that is conscienceless and as remorseless as the grace.”
2. Their Mourning (Vs. 15-17a)
 - a. They stand afar off from the city, afraid that they will come under the same judgment.
 - b. They mourn with a particular emphasis upon the wealth of Babylon – “For in one hour **so great riches** is come to nought.” (Vs. 17a) How tragic that mankind things wealth and prosperity is their saviour!
- C. The Mariners (Vs. 17b-19)**
1. Their mourning is also dramatic and heart wrenching. They weep, wail and cast dust on their heads.
 2. Their mourning also is focused particularly on wealth – “Alas, alas, that great city, wherein where **made rich** all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness.” (Vs. 19)
 3. Challenge: As believers, we should have a Biblical perspective on worldly riches and possessions and should be focused on heavenly treasures rather than earthly treasures (Prov. 23:4-5; Prov. 28:22; 1 Tim. 6:6-11; Matt. 6:19-21; Col. 3:1-2). We need to cultivate a spirit of contentment rather than covetousness (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Heb. 13:5). In our affluent country, it would be safe to say that most Christians, to some degree or another are far too attached to wealth

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and the pursuit of it. This includes those who attend Bible believing, Bible preaching churches.

4. Walvoord: "In contrast to the transitory wealth and glory of this world, which are here consumed by a great judgment from God, the true riches of faith, devotion and service for God are safely stored in heaven beyond the destructive hands of man and protected by the righteous power of God."

IV. THE CELEBRATION OF BABYLON'S FALL (VS. 20)

A. The Exhortation to Praise (Vs. 20)

1. Heaven has the opposite response to earth's inhabitants. There is great rejoicing that the world system under the dominion of Satan has finally been destroyed.
2. "God hath avenged you on her" = God repays this evil world for its injustices and evils committed against God's people (See Vs. 24) Vengeance is God's work, not ours – "*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*" (Rom. 12:19)

B. The Expression of Praise (19:1-6)

1. This is heaven's response to this call to worship.
2. To be studied more next message.

V. THE ILLUSTRATION OF BABYLON'S FALL (VS. 21-24)

A. The Demonstration of the Angel (Vs. 21a)

1. "a mighty angel" = another angel of power and great strength
2. "a stone like a great millstone" = this is not a small millstone like the ones used by women (Mt. 24:41) but one turned by a donkey (Mk. 9:42). These were 4-5 feet in diameter, 12 inches (30 cm) thick and weighed thousands of pounds.
3. "cast it into the sea" = the stone would sink rapidly in the ocean waves and provide a visual illustration of the decline of Babylon.

B. The Declaration of the Angel (Vs. 21b-24)

The angel declares the cessation of life and industry in the city in an extended way to emphasize the completeness of God's judgment upon the city. The phrase "**no more at all**" or similar occurs 6 times. The emphasis is also upon the sounds, rather than the sights of the city. It now stands in eerie silence. There would be no more...

1. The End of the City (Vs. 21b-23a)
 - a. Music (Vs. 22a) "The vocal and instrumental music that characterized the city's life and luxurious existence is now silent." (Walvoord) It is interesting to note the emphasis upon music in Antichrist's kingdom. "This is very interesting in light of the fact that the end times is an age of recorded sound. Never in the history of the world has music been such a prominent part of society." (Cloud) We can see the world shaping up for the Antichrist's kingdom with the Babylonish beat that has swept the world through the pop culture. We live in the age of digital music where platforms like **iTunes** currently offer **60 million songs** for download. Ungodly music will be a feature of the world over which Antichrist reigns.

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- b. Manufacturing (Vs. 22b)
- c. Marrying (Vs. 23)
- 2. The Evil of the City (Vs. 23b-24)
 - 3 reasons are given for the destruction of the city:
 - a. Pride and Prosperity (Vs. 23b)
 - b. Witchcraft and Wickedness (Vs. 23c) The word 'sorceries' comes from the Greek word 'pharmakeia' and refers to witchcraft in all its forms. The same word is translated 'witchcraft' in Gal. 5:20. We get our word 'pharmacy' from this word so it also applies to drugs which are closely associated with the activity of demon spirits.
 - c. Murder and Martyrdom (Vs. 24)

Conclusion: We close with two challenges

1. Are you a citizen of 'Babylon' or a citizen of heaven? The day you get saved is the day your citizenship gets transferred from this world's system, the kingdom of darkness, to heaven, the kingdom of light (Phil. 3:20).
2. Are you living for this world or the world that is to come? Are you living for the temporary things of this life or the eternal things of the next life?