

Revelation 18 – The Pronouncement of Babylon’s Judgment

The explanation of Babylon and the beast’s identity is concluded and this chapter emphasizes God’s true people coming out from Babylon on whom judgment is falling. This is a further explanation of what the bowls have shown us. God’s wrath is poured out on Babylon. (Notice the running parallel here with Jeremiah 51)

I. The Warning Of Babylon’s Judgment (1-4)

A. A Glorious Angel Is Seen (1)

1. Some see the identity of the mighty angel as Christ
 - a. The angel of the Lord in the OT is often representative of the Son, the second person of the Trinity
 - b. Revelation never attributes “glory” to any being other than God (The persons of the Father or Son)
 - i. For Father See 4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 19:1; 21:11, 23.
 - ii. For Son See 1:6; 5:12-13; 21:23
2. Some see the identity of the mighty angel as a representative messenger of Christ
 - a. It is possible that the messenger simply reflects the glory of God
 - b. The identification of the angel is not essential to interpreting the chapter
3. The Land / Earth is brightened with His glory
 - a. The glory of God (represented here) is more radiant than Babylon herself in the earth
 - b. This appearance captures the attention of all who see, including those who may be swayed to return to Babylon

B. The Proclamation Concerning Babylon (2-3)

1. The Declaration of Babylon’s Fall (2a)

- a. Fallen Fallen is Babylon the Great...
 - i. This is the same statement as in Revelation 14:8
 - ii. This is another reference to the fall of Babylon in Isa. 21:9
- b. Again we see a recapitulation for explanatory purposes

2. The Description of Babylon’s Judgment (2b)

- a. Babylon has been turned over to darkness
 - i. Her false beautiful front has been stripped away revealing the darkness within
 - ii. She has been turned over by God to that darkness
- b. Babylon has become a “haunt” (i.e. prison, keep) of demons and unclean things
 - i. This is a parallel to the judgment God pronounces on Babylon in Isa. 13:21-22

- This may not come through in many English translations
- In the Septuagint (Greek OT), which Christians used exclusively in the early centuries, the Isaiah text says that “sirens” and “demons” dance there.
- The Isa. Text also lists many unclean animals that will dwell there
- ii. This is also seen in Isa. 34:10-14 as a Judgment on Edom
 - The NASB says “hairy goats” (ESV – “wild goats”) dwell there
 - The Greek OT says “demons”
 - This text also lists many unclean animals that will dwell there
- iii. This is also seen in Jeremiah 51:37 where Babylon will be a “haunt of jackals” and other unclean animals
- iv. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be overrun by demons in judgment
 - Matt. 12:42-45 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.”
- c. Babylon is characterized opposite of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:27, where “nothing unclean will enter”
- 3. The Account of Babylon’s Crime (3)
 - a. Fornication with the Kings of the Earth / Land
 - i. Babylon is seen “fornicating” with the nations of the earth in Ezekiel 16 (See Ezekiel 16:14-15, 26, 28-30; 23:12-21; Jer. 51:6-8.

- ii. Here, once again, Jerusalem and the Judaic religion is compared with Babylon
 - iii. There is also an allusion to the prophecy of judgment made against Tyre in Isa. 23:17
 - b. The Merchants have Grown Rich from Her
 - i. These will be explained in depth at the end of this chapter
 - c. We have already see the harlot imagery applied to Jerusalem in Revelation from the Old Testament
- C. The Call To Flee From Babylon (4)
 - 1. God calls His People to Separate From Babylon
 - a. This References Many OT texts calling God's people out of Babylon
 - i. Jeremiah 51:45 - Come forth from her midst, My people, And each of you save yourselves From the fierce anger of the Lord.
 - ii. Jeremiah 51:6 - Flee from the midst of Babylon, And each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, For this is the Lord's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.
 - iii. Isaiah 48:20 - Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this, Send it out to the end of the earth; Say, "The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob."
 - iv. Isaiah 52:11 - Depart, depart, go out from there, Touch nothing unclean; Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, You who carry the vessels of the Lord.
 - NOTICE that Paul also uses Isaiah 52:11 in 2 Corinthians 6:17 to call Christians (God's people) out of worldliness
 - b. The Refers to Jesus Followers Coming Out From Judaism
 - i. We have already seen that Jesus called Jewish believers to flee Jerusalem when they saw her surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20)
 - ii. Christians who follow Christ in the first century were repeatedly tempted to "go back" to the foundations and practices of Judaism
 - The entire book of Hebrews is written specifically for the purpose of exhorting Jewish believers not to go back to Judaism
 - The temptation to go back to Judaism was very great as

persecution of Christianity continually increased and Judaism tried to separate themselves from Christians in the eyes of Rome

- This temptation was also great for Gentile Christians (even in Asia Minor where the seven churches were located)
 - Galatians, Philippians, Corinthians, Romans, and Acts all deal (in some part) with people known as Judaizers
 - Judaizers tempted Gentile Christians to add the Mosaic stipulations to their faith in Jesus (i.e. circumcision, food laws, etc.)
 - This was the question settled in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem council after Paul and Barnabas battled these people who tried to deceive the church at Antioch

iii. The Entire Bible deals with God glorifying Himself by fulfilling the covenant of salvation which leads to completion in Jesus Christ. Yet many of the people try to continue living in community with God through the signs and types that pointed to the reality

2. God calls His People Not To Participate in Her Sins

- a. To return to Judaic Religion is to reject the only sacrifice for sin
- b. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (the wiping away of biblical Judaism) is important to the first century Christians – both Jew and Gentile
 - i. To follow Judaizers in adding to Christ's sufficiency is to destroy the only means of salvation – Gal. 5:2 - Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.
 - ii. Hebrews 10:26 - For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, - the context of this chapter is that the sacrifices of the Temple priests, which consisted of bulls and goats, are no longer effective. So if we go back to that, there is no sacrifice able to remove sins.

II. The Certainty of Babylon's Judgment (5-8)

A. The Judgment Proclamation (5-6)

1. God Remembers Babylon's Sins (5)
 - a. Because she has rejected the only atonement for sins, there is no forgiveness in any other religious ordinance
 - b. The Holy and Righteous God will not forgive sins by any other sacrifice or under any other name than Jesus Christ
2. God Will Repay Babylon For Her Sins (6)
 - a. The judgment that sin deserves will be heaped upon Babylon for her crimes
 - i. Remember the last chapter characterized these people as those whose names were not written in the book of life
 - b. We have already seen the Old Testament imagery of the cup of her sins – God will judge her as she has corrupted others

B. The Rebellion of Babylon Explained (7)

1. She Chose the World's Luxury (7a)
2. She Exalted Herself (7b)
3. She Rejected The Idea of Judgment (7c)
 - a. All these ideas allude to God's allegations against Babylon given in Isaiah 47
 - b. Isaiah 47:7-9 - You said, "I shall be mistress forever, so that you did not lay these things to heart or remember their end. 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": 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.
 - c. The adulterous wife believes herself righteous and immovable
 - d. She, just like Babylon in the OT, is sorely mistaken. God has rejected his covenant breaking wife and will be united with the Bride of the Lamb. Remember, this adultery that she is guilty of is not just sinning, it is rejection of the covenant fulfilling Messiah.

C. The Destruction of Babylon Inevitable (8)

III. The Response to Babylon's Judgment (9-20)

A. Those Who Mourn Over Babylon (9-19)

1. The Kings of the Land Lament Her Judgment (9-10)
 - a. These are those in power over the land
 - i. We have seen the rulers of the land before
 - ii. They include people like Herod, Philip the Tetrarch, and the religious temple rulers

- b. Remember Jerusalem and the Temple was much more than just a city to the Jews
 - i. It was the center of religious, spiritual, and political life in the region
 - ii. It was the focal point of all of Jewish culture and heritage
 - iii. NOTE: Even the Romans didn't specifically desire the destruction of the Temple when the Jews revolted. When they finally broke through the walls, chaos ensued and all was destroyed
 - c. All those who received their power and position because of their connection to the Temple and the city of Jerusalem mourned the loss of the city
 - d. No longer would they benefit from the luxury Jerusalem offered them.
- 2. The Merchants of the Land Lament Her Judgment (11-17a)
 - a. Babylon No Longer Buys Their Goods (11-13)
 - i. All these commodities are similar to the list given in Ezekiel 27:13-22 as judgment is pronounced on Tyre.
 - ii. Can Jerusalem be described as this kind of cultural and economic center?
 - iii. "The conclusion is reached that foreign trade had considerable importance for the Holy City. The Temple drew the largest share. For the rest, foreign trade consisted of food supplies, precious metals, luxury goods, and clothing materials." (Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Fortress Press, 1969) p. 38
 - iv. "In fact the province of Syria, to which the province of Judea really belonged was the equal of Egypt, as far as commerce and industry was concerned, among the provinces of the Roman Empire. So cultural conditions were favorable for commerce in Jerusalem. Ibid. p. 51
 - v. "In these streets and lanes everything might be purchased: the production of Palestine, or imported from foreign lands – nay, the rarest articles from the remotest parts. Exquisitely shape, curiously designed and jeweled cups, rings, and other workmanship of precious metals; glass, silks, fine linen, woolen stuffs, purple, and costly hangings; essences, ointments, and perfumes, as precious as gold; articles of food and drink from foreign lands – in short, what India, Persia, Arabia, Media, Egypt, Italy,

Greece, and even the far-off lands of the Gentiles yielded, might be had in these bazaars. Ancient Jewish writings enable us to identify no fewer than 118 different articles of import from foreign lands, covering more than even modern luxury has devised." Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the messiah*, Vol. 1 p. 116

- b. Babylon's Luxuries Are Removed From Her (14)
 - i. Notice that these luxuries are what she has set her heart upon
 - ii. She no longer seeks devotion to God or righteousness, but is drunk with her power, beauty, and prestige.
- c. The Lament of the Merchants (15-17a)
 - i. The song of their woe – judgment has fallen suddenly

- 3. The Sailors Lament Her Judgment (17b-19)
 - a. This section also alludes to Ezekiel 27:28-33
 - b. The Sailors Cry For the City's Loss (17b-19a)
 - c. The Lament of The Sea Farers (19b)

B. Those Who Rejoice Over Babylon (20)

- 1. The people of God are commanded to rejoice over Babylon's fall
- 2. Notice that the enemy of Christ is the enemy of God the Father and the enemy of the people of God
 - a. The saints under the altar have been crying for judgment since chapter four
 - b. Not finally their judgment is given – justice is served
 - c. The people are to rejoice over the fall of God's enemy as the imprecatory Psalms pray for their downfall

IV. The Summary of Babylon's Judgment (21-24)

A. The Picture of Babylon's Fall (21)

- 1. A Millstone is Thrown Into The Sea
- 2. Babylon Will Be As The Millstone
 - a. This is the exact picture that Jesus gives about what will happen to those who cause Christ's little ones to stumble
 - b. This is seen in Luke 17:2; Matt. 18:6; and Mark 9:42
 - c. It is also an allusion to Jer. 51:61-64, where Jeremiah is told to tie a stone to the book and cast it into the Euphrates – so will Babylon be
- 3. The city will be no more
 - a. Josephus, Wars 7:1:1 - but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had

ever been inhabited. (4) This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.

- b. This alludes to the fact that Jerusalem will no longer be found as the city of God
 - i. Compare the language describing Edom's destruction in Isa. 34:9-10 - And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever. - - Today the ground on which Edom once laid is not burning or wasteland.
 - ii. The body of Christ is now the habitation of God, not a piece of land or a gold encrusted building – see 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10; Gal. 6:16; Matt. 21:43
 - iii. Romans 11 does describe the position that before the end of history, Jews as a group will come to faith in Christ – but when they do, they will also be part of the body of Christ.

B. The Results of Babylon's Fall (22-23a)

- 1. These also are allusions to the fall of Tyre in Ezekiel 28
- 2. The point is that everything that characterizes a prospering civilization and the blessings of God will be removed
- 3. Some link each of these categories with the Temple itself
 - a. Music will be there no more (22a)
 - i. The Levite singers / musicians (1 Chron. 25/Ezek. 28:13)
 - b. Craftsmen will be there no more (22b)
 - i. Craftsmen making the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 31:1-11; 1 Ki. 5)
 - ii. David Chilton says that these craftsmen should be viewed through the lens of Zechariah 1:18-21 which shows four craftsmen who restrain the tyranny of the heathen over God's people
 - c. The Mill's sound will be there no more (22c)
 - i. The temple itself is built upon the "threshing floor" or the mill on Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1)
 - d. The Light will shine there no more (23a)
 - i. The lampstands in the temple – Ex. 25:31-40; 2 Chron. 4:19-22
 - e. The Voice of marriage will be there no more (23b)

C. The Reason For Babylon's Fall (23c-24)

1. She has deceived the nations (23c)
2. She has killed God's people and messengers (24)
 - a. Matt. 23:34-38 - Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate.