

Babylon Is Fallen, Part 1

Revelation 18:1-2

66-63

Well tonight again in our marvelous and thrilling study of the book of Revelation which I confess has been interrupted over the last several weeks, and I regret that. We always lose a momentum when we have those necessary interruptions, but oh how wonderful it is to be back to chapter 18. Turn in your Bible then to Revelation chapter 18. We're going to begin an examination of this chapter containing twenty-four verses. At this particular time, I don't know how long it will take us to get through. We won't make it tonight. We may get to verse 2. I'm not sure. But we want all that the Lord has for us in this profound text, Revelation chapter 18.

We're all curious about the current state of the world economically. We're all anxious to hear about the condition of world trade, global commerce, dollar values against foreign currency. We want to know our financial future. So we're interested to hear about the stock market, interest rates, budget, deficits, all of that kind of thing fills the newspapers and the magazines and the radio and the television.

I suppose more so than ever in the history of the world people are aware of economics. And more so than ever in the history of the world we live in a world where we are all tied together very closely in what amounts to a single economy, and ever-increasingly that is so. No more are economies of the world isolated, national economies. But rather we are all inter linked because of a shrinking globe, a global village because of foreign trade, we are all tied together. We have a global economy.

And that's very fitting because that is precisely what Revelation chapter 18 describes as a component of the final form of man's day before the return of Jesus Christ. What of the future? Well for one thing there will be a global economy, under the control of the final Antichrist. What will that world economy be like? Without question it will not be communistic, it will be capitalistic. It will be a luxurious, materialistic, capitalist world when Jesus comes in judgment. In fact, the world will be pursuing capitalism with a vengeance. Communism came and went, the bad social experiment and an even worse economic experiment. It will not apparently be a factor of significance in the last days economy, capitalism will reign and luxury will be the pursuit of all. And I know this because this is precisely the picture of the world of the final Antichrist. The individual who as the emissary of Satan rules the globe in the years before Jesus returns to establish His kingdom which will be a true kingdom of prosperity.

Now for those of you who may be new to our study of the book of Revelation, let me give you a brief review. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ who was crucified and rose again and ascended to heaven will return to earth one day, and He will return to earth to judge sinners, to destroy the wicked and to set up His kingdom on earth over which He will rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That kingdom initially will be made up of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who love and serve the true God.

The first time Jesus came He was crowned with mockery. The next time He comes He will be crowned with majesty. The first time He came He reigned from a tree, the next time He comes He will reign from a throne. The first time He came He ruled with a reed, the second time He comes He will rule with a rod. We are to make no mistake about it, this world is destined to climax in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ bodily and in great power and in great glory.

Chapter 19 of the book of Revelation describes that return. Chapters 20 to 22 describe what happens after that return, and chapters 6 to 18, what happens before that return. So we are in the last chapter of the section prior to the return of Jesus Christ described in chapter 19. It's a crucial chapter because it gives us the world conditions at the time of the final judgment of sinners, when Jesus comes to set up His kingdom. It is the most complete picture of the world at the end of man's day, the system of worldwide government and commerce controlled by the Antichrist who is called the beast in the book of Revelation.

Now it is described in Revelation 18 in the context of a judgment. In some ways you could call chapter 18 a requiem, a funeral dirge. It is a very somber chapter. In the last days before the Lord returns there is reason to be somber. Satan will be in control of the universe, at least the world of men. But the universe which he has once controlled is starting to collapse around him and his demons who have been occupying the heavens are now cast to the earth. Satan then on the earth with all of his millions of demons is working through two key persons, namely Antichrist and the False Prophet to gain control of the world. It's his last bastion of defense. Catapulted out of heaven, as Revelation 12 described, sent to the earth, he then occupies himself with the final stand against God and against his Christ on the earth.

In an effort to withstand the power of God and the coming of Christ, Satan tries to set up a kingdom that is indomitable. Evil reaches its apex. Iniquity is filled up. Rebellion against God and Christ are at their peak during this time in Antichrist's kingdom. And even when God sends judgment after judgment after judgment on this Antichrist's world, their reaction is negative. In fact, in chapter 16 verse 11 it says, "They blasphemed the God of heaven." And again in verse 21, "Men blasphemed God."

The world will be so evil that even with all the warnings, all the preaching of the gospel by the hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses, the converted Jews, others who have named the name of Christ, the two witnesses who are killed and raised from the dead, angels in the sky that are proclaiming the gospel, with all that preaching there will be many who believe but the world of rejecters will become more hostile and more hostile until ultimately they blaspheme God for everything that's happening.

Now in this final world before the coming of Jesus Christ, there is a period called the Great Tribulation. The Bible describes a seven-year period as the period prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, the seventieth week of Daniel. The second half of that, the final three and a half years, is called the Great Tribulation. That Great Tribulation is when God's fiery judgments begin to escalate in terrifying ways as the Lord begins to judge this evil world system. But at that time the world system that exists during that Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years, is the system described here in chapter 18. I believe that the religious system described in chapter 17 will have ceased to exist for the most part by the second half of the Tribulation because at the midpoint is when the Antichrist will no longer tolerate the coexisting religious system and destroys it and forces the world not only to

follow him alone, but to worship him as if he were God.

Now remember, in chapter 17 we were given a picture of the religious system of the end time called Mystery Babylon. Here in chapter 18 we're getting a picture of the political, economic system of the end time called Babylon the Great. These two systems share much in common. They share the same name, Babylon. They share the same satanic power. They are alike in that they both are under the rule of the Antichrist. They are both ruling like queens and filled with blasphemy. They both hate the saints and shed their blood. They both are associated with the kings of the earth in what is called fornication. They both come under the definitive judgment of God and are destroyed. But with that the similarities end and there are marked differences between Mystery Babylon of chapter 17, and Babylon the Great of chapter 18.

Religious Babylon, as I said, is called Mystery Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth, whereas commercial Babylon is called the Great Babylon, and Babylon the Great. The one is described under the symbol of a harlot woman seated upon the beast of government, and the other is presented as a mighty city. The seventeenth chapter presents ecclesiastical Babylon as a woman, a whore, a mother. The eighteenth chapter presents commercial Babylon as a habitation, a great city, a mighty city, a marketplace and even a burning city.

The woman of seventeen is described as guilty of religious abominations. The city of eighteen is abominable because of its system of commerce. The manner of their destruction also is different. The woman is destroyed by the political power through which she has come to reign so arrogantly. But the city is destroyed by an act of God.

And so, I want to emphasize to you that I believe Babylon of chapter 17 is a religious system, and Babylon of chapter 18 is a commercial system. And they will coexist in the first half of the seven-year Tribulation. But at the midpoint, the Antichrist will not tolerate that coexistence, he will not tolerate the divided loyalties between commerce and religion. He will not tolerate anything other than the worship of himself and so at the midpoint the system that is religious is destroyed, totally devastated, consumed, burned with fire and one system remains and that is commercial Babylon in which the Antichrist rules and himself is worshiped as God.

I might say that all the diverse religious ideologies of the world will eventually fall into this one-world religion called Mystery Babylon. And when Mystery Babylon is destroyed in favor of the Antichrist who alone will rule and be worshiped, all of the religious elements of Mystery Babylon will become absorbed into the commercial Babylon. It isn't that there will cease to be religion, it is that the religion will be the worship of the Antichrist and him alone. He will put himself up as if he were God and demand that everyone worships him.

This very act is described, by the way, back in chapter 13 where the False Prophet who is called another beast comes. He performs, verse 13, great signs so that he even makes fire come out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. He deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword, and has come to life. In other words, the False Prophet who I believe has been heading up the religious system, when the religious system is destroyed, then takes on a new enterprise and that is to call the whole world to the worship of the beast. And that's destroyed, that worship of the false religion, but its leader, the False Prophet, is not destroyed, he simply moves over and becomes the right-hand agent for the Antichrist.

Chapter 17, you'll remember, and I'm just reviewing, verses 16 and 17 describe the destruction of the religious system. It talks about the harlot being made desolate and naked. Her flesh eaten and she being burned up with fire. And God has put it in their hearts to do this because He wants them to have a common purpose by giving their kingdom to the beast alone. God wants the whole thing consolidated in one, for His own purposes of destruction.

So, by the time we come then to chapter 18, we are seeing the description of a commercial empire, that is the final form of world rule under the power of Antichrist which will destroy the religion of the world, enfold all religion in the worship of Antichrist and be the single system that is destroyed by Christ when He returns. The Babylon of 18 thus is the world system of the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation.

Now you have to understand something quite remarkable. We talk about the power of the Antichrist, but I want you to understand this is a very, very powerful man. In order to get a grasp on how powerful he is, you need only to remind yourself that he has built this world empire and gained the confidence of the kings of the world and the rulers of the world with the aid of Satan and demonic influence. He has pulled off a world empire in the midst of the worst of times. For all the way back in chapter 6 certain judgments began to fall, called the seven seals. Those seven seals were only really the beginning of frightening and fearful judgments. You come in to chapter 8 and more judgments come called trumpet judgments. And while the first of the trumpets may have been occurring still in the first half of the seven-year period, as we move in to the trumpets and get say to the fifth trumpet, we're now in to that second half so that the fifth trumpet and the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet and then in chapter 16 the seven bowl judgments which are unbelievable and almost inconceivable judgments are all being poured out in the world. It is then in the midst of all of this that Antichrist has the power to pull off this tremendous world empire.

He is aided, chapter 9 of Revelation tells us as demons come belching out of the pit, he is aided as two hundred million demons who have been bound at the Euphrates River are released. The demon force aids him in his enterprise, even though the universe is collapsing all around him, a third of the sea has been destroyed, a third of the fresh water has been destroyed, a third of the sun. Comets and heavenly bodies catapulting out of space, plummeting into the earth. A third of the stars go out, the seasons are in chaos, the tides are in chaos. Day and night is in chaos. Frightening and indescribable judgments are flying in every direction. People are struck with cancerous malignancies. The sea becomes like blood and everything in it dies. The fresh waters and the springs of water become like blood and are deadly. The sun begins to burn people as its heat is intensified and turned up. And in the midst of that the whole world becomes dark. More demon spirits like frogs come belching out of the pit.

All of this is going on and at the same time the Antichrist is building a world empire on a materialistic basis. And if you will notice in verse 12, cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and linen and purple and silk and scarlet and citron wood and every article of ivory and articles made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. There's a lot of stuff going on.

Now this kingdom begins before those terrible judgments of the bowls start. They're right at the very end. This kingdom will be flourishing before those bowl judgments hit, granted. But nonetheless in

order for the Antichrist to pull this off he's had to have supernatural satanic and demonic power because certainly the trumpet judgments have been going on. And the effect of those trumpet judgments, as I noted for you earlier in chapter 8, has been devastating.

But even though the trumpet judgments have been going on and at the very end the bowl judgments happen, this kingdom succeeds to some degree. Verse 17 talks about great wealth...great wealth.

So we get a little bit of an idea of the tremendous power of the Antichrist. Back to chapter 9, you see the power of the demon world that is aiding him. So this is the kingdom that is described here in chapter 18.

Now, one other thing to say. Babylon of chapter 18 is called a city. It is called a city. For example, look at verse 18, "What city is like the great city?" The Babylon of this chapter is identified as a city. I just want to mention to you that some commentators would suggest that it doesn't mean a city. That it is not a reference to a literal city but only to a godless system. That could be. But in order to make such a conclusion you have to be a little bit bold since chapter 18 doesn't say that. It just calls it a city. So if we're going to decide that it isn't a city, then that's an arbitrary decision. Now it may well be that it's not a city, it's certainly far beyond a city, as I'll point out in a moment. But we can't make that conclusion without just making it arbitrarily.

And there are many features in the text, as we shall see, that identify it as a city. And there is nothing in the entire twenty-four verses that identifies it as anything other than a city. So to avoid being arbitrary, I'd rather take it at face value. And if the Lord has something else in mind, He could have said it, and perhaps if He has something else in mind, some day it will become clear to the people who are alive at this time. But for now, who am I to suggest that a city is not a city when God says it's a city?

One strong reason for maintaining that it is a literal city is that many Old Testament prophecies regarding the city of Babylon have not yet been fulfilled. Did you get that? Many of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Babylon have not yet been fulfilled. Some of them were fulfilled, some of them were partially fulfilled, some of them were not fulfilled. And if God made certain prophecies that were to come to pass in Babylon and they didn't come to pass, then they must come to pass. And if they must come to pass, there must be a Babylon to come to pass in.

Prophecies regarding the city of Babylon are found in Isaiah 13, Isaiah 47, Jeremiah 50, Jeremiah 51, Ezekiel 26, Ezekiel 27 and elsewhere. All of those chapters have features of Babylon's destruction that have not fully come to pass. And so there are many Bible scholars who say there must rise again a Babylon in order that what God promised would happen to Babylon happens.

For example, go with me to Isaiah chapter 13...Isaiah chapter 13. And let's just look at a few verses, starting in verse 9. "Behold the day of the Lord is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger to make the land a desolation, and He will exterminate its sinners from it, for the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light, the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light." Now that sounds eschatological, doesn't it? That sounds like the end time day of the Lord.

Verse 11, "I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity, I will also put an end to

the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal men scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir." Now you're talking about massive slaughter. "Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place and at the fury of the Lord of hosts in the day of His burning anger." Now that has to be eschatological.

And yet to whom is this spoken? To whom is this spoken? Go back to verse 1. "The oracle concerning...whom?...Babylon." What is described in verses 9 to 12 didn't happen historically in Babylon. But it will happen.

Look at Isaiah 47, here's another similar situation, another prophecy against Babylon as noted in verse 1. "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon." But notice the prophecy starting in verse 7, "Yet you said...that is Babylon...I shall be a queen forever. These things you didn't consider, nor remember the outcome of them. Now then hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart "I am and there's no one beside me, I shall not sit as a widow nor shall I know loss of children. The smug confidence of a city that felt itself to be impregnable. But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day. Loss of children and widowhood, they shall come on you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells, and you felt secure in your wickedness and said no one sees me. Your wisdom and your knowledge they deluded you, for you have said in your heart I am and there's no one beside me, but evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away and disaster will fall on you for which you cannot atone and destruction about which you do not know will come on you suddenly."

Literally it says in one day, and that has never happened. No such sudden destruction, leaving perpetual devastation has come to Babylon. And so it seems reasonable to assume if it hasn't come, it has to come. And if it has to come, there has to be a Babylon.

Look at Jeremiah chapter 50...Jeremiah chapter 50 verse 1, "Thus says the Lord, `Behold, I'm going to arouse against Babylon, I'm going to arouse the spirit of a destroyer and I'll dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her and may devastate her land for on every side they will be opposed to her in the day of her calamity. Let not him who bends his bow bend it, nor let him rise in his scale armor. So do not spare her young men. Devote all her army to destruction and they will fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans...another name for Babylon...and pierce through in their streets."

Down in verse 40, (Jeremiah 51) further describing the judgment on Babylon. "I'll bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams together with male goats. How Sheshak has been captured." That, by the way, is a cryptic name for Babylon. "And the praise of the whole earth been seized! How Babylon has become an object of horror among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves. Her cities have become an object of horror, a parched land and a desert, a land in which no man lives, and through which no son of man passes. I shall punish Bel in Babylon and I shall make what he has swallowed come out of his mouth, and the nations will not longer stream to him. Even the wall of Babylon has fallen down! Come forth from her midst, My people, and each of you save yourselves from the fierce anger of the Lord." Get out of there because what I'm going to do to that city.

The prophet said the Arabian would be afraid to pitch his tent there. It will be an abode of dragons, empty without inhabitants, a wasteland destroyed and its destruction will be violent.

But Babylon has not been violently overthrown. It has not been violently and totally destroyed in a day. But rather has slowly declined and passed from history over many centuries. So these prophecies need to come to pass. And they will.

Babylon was the first place ruled by violence. Babylon founded by Nimrod was once the world's capital, the place where false religion was first conceived, the place of world dominion under Nebuchadnezzar, the first world ruler. And Babylon will rise again. Interestingly enough, as you well know the Iraqis are building a special ceremonial city called Babylon. It can be visited, it is visited even now. It is being built on its ancient site.

Also curiously, Arnold Toynbee(?), no less a historian than he, once wrote that he believed Babylon will become the world's natural population center because of its perfect location at the very heart of the crossroads of the continents of Asia and Europe and Africa.

And so I think it's reasonable, although I don't want to be absolutely dogmatic, based upon what we know from the prophets and what we can read in Revelation 18, we have a city here that needs to rise again in order to be destroyed in the way that the Bible defines its destruction. And as we shall see, there are some very specific things that are said in chapter 18 that hark us right back to those prophecies that I read you earlier, so that the writer of Revelation and John as he sees the vision and then writes, is being told, in effect, that what the prophet, for example, Isaiah and Jeremiah said, is indeed what he is seeing in the vision of the destruction of the future Babylon.

Now, having said all of that, let me then say this. While I believe that Babylon is a city, I believe that the influence of Babylon is worldwide. It is the capital city of the Antichrist's world rule. It is then more than a city, the city is its namesake and its capital. But it is the pervasive character of the age of Antichrist.

You remember that Mystery Babylon of chapter 17 seemed to be associated, didn't it, with a city on seven hills named Rome. Perhaps for a while there is a capital in the Tribulation time, a capital of the religious enterprise at Rome for a while until the destruction of that religious empire and then the capital of everything becomes Babylon. It's not to say it's only Babylon and the destruction that comes here will extend beyond that city while engulfing that city to the entire system. Like Mystery Babylon of chapter 17, Babylon the Great is about to fall at the judgment of God.

Now plenty of warnings have come before we get to chapter 18. Go back to chapter 14 verse 8, taking my time in this chapter because I want you to understand it. Chapter 14 and verse 8, an angel comes as so often they do in the latter part of the book. A second one saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great." Here is a warning. Here is an announcement that should get people ready for the inevitable. Remember now, the gospel is being preached by the hundred and forty-four thousand. It's been preached by two witnesses who gave their lives, rose from the dead and continue to preach. It's been preached by anyone who has been converted. It's being preached by angels flying through mid-heaven preaching so the whole world can hear. The gospel is being preached. Judgment is flying all around. And in the midst of that, a very specific announcement, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality," and that shows the national and international influence of Babylon.

but in the midst of all the warning, the people of the world reject. And so we finally come to chapter 18 and the judgment falls. Now all of that gets us to verse 1. I'm going to give you seven aspects of this chapter, and I may adjust these as we go, so don't hold me to these terms exactly. We're going to see judgment pronounced, judgment avoided, judgment enjoyed, judgment lamented, judgment executed and judgment justified. The theme, obviously, is judgment. At least let's look at judgment pronounced.

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven having great authority and the earth was illumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice saying, `Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great...same thing that was said in chapter 14 verse 8...and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird, for all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

This is an opening pronouncement of judgment, tells you judgment is coming and a little bit about why, because of the tremendous pervasive demonic influence, and because of the wretched sensuality described in verse 3. So John's vision then begins with judgment pronounced and it begins with another angelic messenger. Verse 1, notice the little phrase, "After these things." Now that phrase appears a number of times in the book of Revelation and introduces us to the next vision. Without begging the issue I would like to suggest that that little phrase supports the distinction between chapter 17 and 18. It identifies a later revelation than that of chapter 17. The reason I say that is because there are some commentators who...it's beyond me why...insist on making chapter 17 and chapter 18 describe the same thing. I don't see that. I see, as I've told you before, 17 is the religious system, 18 is the commercial system, the little phrase "after these things" supports the distinction.

John says, "I saw another angel coming down from heaven." Not the same angel of chapter 17. There is the mention of an angel in chapter 17 verse 1, verse 7, verse 15. You remember the angel who served as John's guide in the previous revelation? Well this is another one, another one like the one in 17. Some people say, "Well this is Christ." No, the word another is allon, it means another of the same kind. It's not heteros, another of a different kind. Christ is different than angels. I think the term allon indicates it's just another angel like the angel who was John's guide through the information of chapter 17.

This angel may well be the same as the angel in 14:8 who said, "Babylon is fallen is fallen." He is an unusually powerful angel and very important, and I'll tell you why. Notice verse 1, three features tell us of the power and importance of this angel. First, having great authority. He comes down from heaven and that means he's coming from the throne of God and the presence of God and as he comes he carries great authority, or great power. He has delegated authority from God to act for God.

Notice verse 21, "And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence and will not be found any longer." This could be the same angel, very powerful, strong angel with delegated authority to act on behalf of God he comes as an executor of judgment.

Secondly, he not only comes down from heaven with great authority, but the earth was illumined with his glory. Now if you go back to chapter 16 and verse 10, you remember that when the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, this is coming now toward the end of the Great Tribulation, when he poured out his bowl his kingdom became darkened. So there is a period at the very end of the Great Tribulation of worldwide darkness. It is against that background that verse 1 says the earth was illumined with the glory of this angel. The earth was dark. Babylon was dark. They have to light not only the night but they have to light the day because God has basically turned out the heavenly lights in His judgment.

And by the way, though chapter 18 describes the system that existed through the seven years, and most particularly that existed during the second half. The vision that John has here is of the very end when the judgment falls. So we can assume that the angel coming at the very end is illuminating an otherwise dark world. The Lord sends then an angel who is a glorious angel to illuminate the darkness. And you can understand what a shocking experience it's going to be when a darkened world sees a blazing angel coming out of heaven bearing also from God God's own shining glory.

And then verse 2, here's the third thing that tells us what a great powerful angel it was, "He cried out with a mighty voice." No one can ignore him. He comes from heaven with great authority, he is an executor of judgment. He comes to earth and illuminates the whole earth with the shining manifestation of divine presence reflected off of him. And he cries out with such a mighty voice that no one can ignore him. He's going to have the commanding attention of the whole world.

And what does he say? Here is his pronouncement of judgment. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great." The relief, the momentary relief of the light will turn to terror at the words of the angel. Identical words to chapter 14 verse 8, and both of those passages go back to Isaiah 21:9.

The statement here "Babylon is fallen, fallen, fallen," is a statement of established ruin. In the form of the Greek it views the results of judgment as if they have happened already. It's done. Historical Babylon, by the way, fell in 539 B.C. That event, of course, God showed to His prophets. But this is a far-greater fall of a far-greater Babylon, a fall that is the annihilation and desolation that Isaiah and Jeremiah promised. And I really do believe that this final fall of Babylon occurs with the seventh bowl judgment.

Go back to chapter 16 verse 17. "When the seventh angel poured out his bowl," this is the last act of judgment. "A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying, 'It is done.' And you have flashes of lightning, sounds, peals of thunder, great earthquake such as there had never been since man came to be upon the earth. So great an earthquake was it and so mighty the great city was split in three parts. And the cities of the nations fell...here's this...and Babylon the Great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away and the mountains were not found and huge hailstones about a hundred pounds each came down from heaven upon men and men blasphemed God because of the severe...because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe." Here I believe you have the parallel. The seventh bowl is the destruction of Babylon described in detail in chapter 18.

Back to verse 2. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great." And then here is a characterization of that city and that kingdom. "She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit

and a prison of every unclean and hateful, or foul bird."

She has become already. That's the reason for the judgment. A dwelling place for demons. Go back to chapter 9 and you will remember that demons are released out of the pit, the first part of chapter 9, then two hundred million demons are released who have been bound at the Euphrates River. Demons are running amuck everywhere. Then you have the demons of chapter 12 that were cast out of heaven to the earth. All of Satan's minions who are not eternally bound. Then you have the filthy spirits of chapter 16 verses 13 and 14, like frogs, spirits of demons going out to deceive the whole world and collect them to the battle of Armageddon.

And the headquarters for the whole demon operation is none other than the city of Babylon. By the way, when Isaiah mentioned this fate for Babylon in Isaiah chapter 13, I think it's 21 and 22, he referred to satyrs, s-a-t-y-r-s, and from the Hebrew that term means devils. So Isaiah when he saw the Babylon of the end, saw a place inhabited by devils. The word satyrs is so translated as devils, by the way, in Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15.

So Babylon is going to get its destruction because it is the headquarters for the demon enterprise of the last days. All the demons of the pit that can be released have been. All the demons of the sky have been catapulted to the earth. All the bound demons released. And because of their influence comes a destruction.

He also says, does this angel, "She...being Babylon...has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit." That's another reference to it being the dwelling place of demons. It is the prison, the phulake, the place where they are kept, the cage they are in. Although it's not to imply that they are in prison because they're free. It's where they dwell, it's where they live. Every unclean spirit and all the demons find their residence in this final Babylon.

Then John adds, "And a prison...same term...of every unclean and hateful bird...unclean and foul bird." Isaiah spoke of this. Back in Isaiah chapter 34, let me just quickly remind you and we're going to stop in just a moment. Isaiah 34 again talks about this destruction that is going to come in the end. And when the destruction comes, and the land is made desolate, it talks about all the different kinds, starting in verse 11 down through verse 15, all the different kind of unclean animals that are going to occupy that land when God comes in judgment. You can just read it for yourself, I won't take the time. Isaiah chapter 34 verses 11 to 15.

So Isaiah the prophet even as he looked down to the end time, to the destruction of the final Babylon, saw its utter desolation and saw that it would be taken over by scavenger birds and unclean animals to chew on the carrion. And really all of that is symbolic of demons and unclean spirits who are devouring the souls of the inhabitants.

By the way, heaven is in contrast to Babylon, for in chapter 21 verse 27, "Nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come into heaven."

The word for "bird," by the way, orneon, from which we get ornithology, the study of birds. It's an old word. It's used only here in the New Testament and in chapter 19 verses 17 and 21, and it depicts evil spirits like hovering birds of prey, scavenger birds hovering over the city waiting to devour their

prey. Here is a picture then of hovering demons waiting to consume people, like literal Babylon which in the past become desolate and occupied by scavenger birds and unclean animals that ran over the destroyed city, so will final Babylon be the cage of Satan's winged unclean spirits.

And this does explain, beloved, why people blaspheme God, because they have been blinded by satanic power and demon possession. And the influence is worldwide, look at verse 3, and we'll close with this. "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

The influence of this Babylon system, this commercial system that is also a worship of Antichrist that is run by demons that is satanic and hellish, their influence is worldwide. They will have literally led the whole world into a materialistic stupor. The whole world, all the nations are going to be drunk with the passion of having a relationship with Babylon. They all want to indulge in the bed of Babylon. They all want to get involved in the luxury and the materialism and the sin of Babylon. It's going to become the wealth center of the world. It's going to seduce the whole world.

We would not like to think, would we, that anything in the Arabic world would become the center of the world, but it will. And here the evil relationship of the nations with Antichrist are described as fornication because that's an intimate term of relationship that is sinful. They have become so enamored with the lure of Babylon, so deceived by demons that they're like a man lusting for a harlot. Their passion is out of control. They are drunk with passion. They're like an inebriated man. They lack self-control. They plunge into a relationship driven by passion, materialistic passion. They want what Babylon can offer. They desire riches and luxury. And as a result, the kings of the earth have committed fornication or acts of immorality with the Babylonian system.

And it says, "The merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality." It's going to be an effective system, even against the odds, as it were, with all of the holocausts and judgments that are flying around. I really believe that when the bowl judgments come at the very end, the thing will disintegrate very rapidly. But up until that time it has survived fairly well the trumpet judgments. The merchants of the earth are getting rich, the kings of the earth are making every alliance they can. There will be national alliances, and there will be mercantile alliances. That is there will be national alliances between the rulers who have been given authority by the Antichrist. You remember there are at least ten of those. And there will also be the business world cashing in, as it were, on what is available in terms of riches.

So the whole world allies with Antichrist in this final system. That is the beginning of this chapter and that's really all it is. I just want to wrap this point up by making a couple of comments and I'm going to let you go.

Why all of this? Why is it necessary? Why does the Bible tell us this? Are we going to be there?

Well, obviously the saints of all the ages who lived and died aren't going to be there. Was it relevant to them?

It's my conviction that the saints of this age aren't going to be there because before this stuff ever starts, we're going to be raptured, taken out as the Lord gathers His church.

What's the point?

The point is multiple. One, to give you confidence that no matter what is happening in the world, in the end Jesus Christ will triumph. This is, after all, the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not the book of the Revelation of prophetic curiosities. It is to give you the confidence and the assurance that in the end Christ will reign. And the corollary to that is to let you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that in the end no matter what goes on with Satan and his demons, they cannot defeat Christ. It can't be done. And you see them amassing all that they can as an arsenal against Him, only to be defeated in a moment as if they were nothing at all.

Furthermore, it is to give hope to the godly that the wretchedness and the wickedness of this fallen world will some day reach an end. And the cry of our hearts for justice and equity and purity and righteousness and goodness will some day be fulfilled. And it will. Furthermore, it is written as a warning to the ungodly of what is to come.

You say, "Well now wait a minute, not all of the ungodly who have lived through the centuries are going to be there." That's right, but anybody who reads this is going to understand God's attitude toward sin. And all of this that goes on on the earth is not as bad as hell. There are many reasons why the Lord gives us this truth, to give us confidence in the coming of Christ in His glory...to give us assurance that sin will have its day and finally be destroyed...to give us hope for a just and equitable and righteous kingdom and to warn those that do not know Christ that God hates sin and He punishes it with severe judgment.

We can only who know this truth respond to it like John did. It's both bitter and sweet. Bitter because sinners will perish, sweet because the righteous will prevail. Bitter because Satan and his demons will succeed in their deception, sweet because Christ will in the end be victorious.

Well so much for the pronouncement of judgment. Next time we'll look at the escape or the avoidance of judgment.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. We've covered so much and yet we've seem to have gone so few steps into this great chapter. Lord, help us to know confidently, assuredly, that we belong to You and we're on the triumph side. Help us to rejoice that no matter how bad it is in this world, Jesus is coming and He will establish His glory. Help us to know that sin will be destroyed and righteousness will reign. At the same time, help us to know that sinners will perish. And while on the one hand we are rejoicing in our triumph, give us a heart to call the lost to salvation, to call them away from demon deception. Let the light of gospel truth shine through us and draw many to yourself. As the world gets worse and worse and darker and darker, we long more and more for the light of the coming King. It's in that hope that we pray in His great name. Amen.

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