

Revelation 18- Babylon the Great is Fallen!

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 

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18:1 - an angel from heaven

- [continuity between Revelation 17 and 18](#)
 Chapters 17 and 18 have the same object in view: the destruction of the city of Babylon. In a similar way that Chapter 15 revealed the bowls of wrath prior to their pouring forth in Chapter 16, so Chapter 17 revealed the Harlot and her predicted destruction which now takes place in Chapter 18. The last verse in Chapter 17 defines the Harlot to be the city which is now destroyed.
- [another angel coming down from heaven](#)
 A different angel from heaven who showed John the Harlot ([Rev. 17:1](#)). This is an angel of great power and authority. He comes from heaven to declare the impending destruction of the city.

18:2 - Babylon the great is fallen

- [Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen](#)
 The word order is reversed in the Greek to emphasize her fall: *It is fallen, it is fallen, Babylon the great!* This may be the same angel that predicted her fall earlier ([Rev. 14:8](#)). Her destruction takes place at the pouring forth of the seventh bowl of God's wrath ([Rev. 16:19](#)). Both the Harlot and the city are called *Babylon the Great* ([Rev. 17:5](#)). See our previous discussion concerning [One or Two Babylons?](#)
- [a dwelling place of demons](#)
 The angel describes her condition *after* her fall. As predicted in the Old Testament, she is to *become* the dwelling place of demonic spirits ([Isa. 13:21-22](#); [Jer. 50:39](#)). "Prison" is *phylake'* which indicates a place of *involuntary* confinement ([Rev. 20:7](#)). During the Millennial Kingdom, when Satan is incarcerated in the abyss ([Rev. 20:1-3](#)), the demons are incarcerated in Babylon and Edom ([Isa. 34:8-17](#)), both of which will be permanently desolate because of judgments.

18:3 - all the nations have drunk

- [all the nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication](#)
 This is the same wine served by the Harlot ([Rev. 17:2](#)). The angel repeats the previous declaration made in Chapter 14 ([Rev. 14:8](#)). In the dispersion from Babel, her pollution went out to all nations and cultures.
- [the kings of the earth have committed fornication](#)
 "Fornication" is *epo'rneusan* which is related to *pornes* : "harlot." As we saw in the previous chapter, the kings fornicated with the Harlot ([Rev. 17:2](#)). By polluting the leaders, she maximizes her influence over the people. Fornication includes both spiritual and material aspects.
- [the merchants of the earth have become rich](#)
 She polluted all aspects of the culture: political, commercial, and religious. "Merchants" is

e'mporoi : one who travels about for trading, a wholesale dealer in contrast to a retailer.

18:4 - come out of her

- **come out of her my people**
The voice may be that of God. The command repeats the many Old Testament prophecies concerning escaping Babylon prior to its destruction ([Isa. 48:20](#); [Jer. 50:8](#); [51:6](#), [9](#), [45](#), [50](#); [Zec. 2:6-7](#)).
- **lest you share in her sins**
"Lest you share" is *syngoïnone'sete*, "lest you all take part in or take a sympathetic interest in." When believers are immersed in a godless culture, they begin to be swayed by the culture and become sympathetic to beliefs which are opposed to God's will.

18:5 - sins reached to heaven

- **her sins have reached to heaven**
God sees every sinful act. But there comes a point when the number and magnitude of sins reaches a point when God's righteous character demands He judge. At this point, the sin is said to gain God's attention in a special way. It *reaches up to heaven* ([2Chr. 28:9](#); [Ezra 9:6](#)). "The iniquity of the Amorites" becomes full ([Gen. 15:16](#)). Instead of building the tower of Babel reaching up to heaven ([Gen. 11:4](#)), Babylon had built a *tower of their own sin* reaching up to heaven!

18:6 - repay her double

- **render to her just as she rendered to you**
"Render" is *apo'dote*, a command: "you all give back to her!" In the phrase "as she rendered to you," *to you* is not in the majority of manuscripts. Thus, this may be spoken to the Beast and his ten kings who God will use to destroy the city ([Rev. 17:16-17](#)).
- **repay her double according to her works**
Under the Law of Moses, a thief had to restore double what was stolen. Jeremiah calls Babylon *Merata'yim* ([Jer. 50:21](#)) meaning "double rebellion." Her judgment is commensurate with her rebellion.

18:7 - I sit as queen

- **she glorified herself and lived luxuriously**
She boasted in her own glory, saying *I shall be a lady forever* ([Isa. 47:7](#)) and *I am and there is no one else beside me* ([Isa. 47:8-10](#)). God calls her *O most haughty one!* ([Jer. 50:31](#)). "Luxuriously" is *estreni'asen*, "living sensually." The term is used of bulls running wild and includes the idea of unbridled revelry ([cf. Dan. 5](#)).
- **I sit as queen, and am no widow**
She reigns over the kings of the earth--sitting upon the Beast with seven heads and ten horns ([Rev. 17:3](#)). Isaiah prophesied that she would be brought off her throne to sit in the dust ([Isa. 47:1-5](#)). Her loss of children may refer to her daughter harlots ([Rev. 17:5](#)), when the cities of the nations fall as part of the seventh bowl judgment ([Rev. 16:19](#)).

18:8 - burned with fire

- **her plagues will come in one day**
When her judgment finally comes, it will be swift and decisive ([Isa. 47:9](#); [Rev. 18:9, 10, 17, 19](#)). See the previous discussion of [The Destruction of Babylon](#).
- **she will be utterly burned by fire**
She is destroyed in the same way as predicted for the Harlot--by fire ([Rev. 17:16](#)). Like Sodom and Gomorrah, her burning is complete and final ([Isa. 13:19-20](#); [47:14](#); [Jer. 50:40](#); [51:58](#); [Rev. 18:9](#)). Her smoke rises up "forever and ever!" ([Rev. 19:3](#)).

18:9 - kings lament

- **the kings of the earth**
These are *different* kings than the "ten kings" which are allied with the beast and who destroy the city ([Rev. 17:16](#)). These are the kings which were gathered to [The Campaign of Armageddon](#) and include the "kings from the east" ([Rev. 16:12-14](#); [17:2](#); [18:3, 7](#); [19:18-19](#)).

18:10 - kings at a distance

- **standing at a distance for fear of torment**
Her judgment is fearsome and visible at a great distance. Their lamentation is not for the *people* destroyed in the city, but for *their personal loss* in the downfall of the city.

18:11 - merchants lament

- **the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn**
"Merchandise" is *go'mon* : a cargo or freight load of goods. Babylon of the end is both a great consumer of goods and a world center for trade. Although material goods are not inherently evil, an abundance of material wealth often contributes to covetousness and idolatry. Believing themselves to be in need of nothing, they had become "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" ([Rev. 3:17](#)).

18:12 - merchandise

- **merchandise of gold and silver...**
Among the merchandise handled by the merchants are the very items worn by the Harlot: *arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls* ([Rev. 18:16](#)).
- **categories of merchandise**
There are seven categories of merchandise listed:
 - 1) Precious wares (gold, silver, precious stones, pearls).
 - 2) Materials of rich attire (fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet).
 - 3) Materials for costly furniture (citron wood, every vessel of ivory, most precious woods, brass, iron, marble).
 - 4) Precious spices (cinnamon, spice, incense, ointment, frankincense).
 - 5) Articles of food (wine, oil, fine flour, wheat).
 - 6) Merchandise for agricultural and domestic use (cattle, sheep, horses, chariots).
 - 7) Traffic in men (bodies and souls of men).

18:13 - bodies and souls

- **chariots**
"Chariots" is *hre'don* which describes a four-wheeled chariot used for transportation (not the two-wheeled chariot of war).
- **wine and oil**
These two items were singled out for protection in the famine attending the opening of the third seal ([Rev. 6:6](#)).
- **bodies and souls of men**
The "and" (*kai*) is better translated "even" : *bodies, even the souls of men*. Meaning: "slaves, that is, human beings." This probably includes sexual slavery such as prostitution. Tyre is said to have traded *human lives* with her trading partners ([Eze. 27:13](#)).

18:14 - your soul longed for

- **the things which are rich and splendid**
"Rich" is *lipara'* : fat and luxurious things. "Splendid" is *lampra'* : bright, shining, glittering things. Both of these categories indicate a populace focused on self-gratification, who are lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure, lacking self-control ([2Ti. 3:2-4](#)).

18:15 - merchants at a distance

- **the merchants... stand at a distance**
Like the kings of the earth, the merchants bemoan the loss of their source of wealth. Isaiah predicted they would abandon Babylon in her judgment ([Isa. 47:15](#)). This characterizes the relationships of the ungodly--they are based on *pragmatism and selfish desires*. They are not genuine. In the time of testing, there is no real empathy or bond.

18:16 - clothed in luxury

- **that great city that was clothed in... gold**
Isaiah called Babylon "the golden city" ([Isa. 14:4](#)). She was the head of *gold* on the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream ([Dan. 2:38](#)). The city bears the same title as the Harlot ([Rev. 17:18](#)) and wears identical attire ([Rev. 17:4](#)). The *Harlot is the city and the city is the Harlot*. See our discussion concerning [One or Two Babylons?](#)

18:17 - shipmasters at a distance

- **came to nothing**
"Came to nothing" is *eremo'the* : be brought to ruin, become desolate, be devastated. The same word is translated *desolate* ([Rev. 18:19](#)). The manner of her destruction matches that of the Harlot ([Rev. 17:16](#)). She will be eternally inhabitable. See the discussion concerning [The Destruction of Babylon](#).
- **every shipmaster**
Like the kings and the merchants, the mariners keep their distance from the destruction of the city which is visible from sea. Although Babylon on the Euphrates is not directly on the coast, the Euphrates is navigable for many miles. Babylon is approximately 370 miles from the Persian gulf. Small boats are said to navigate upriver some 1200 miles. In the past, Herodotus mentions it being navigable for 500 miles. There are several possibilities for shipping to reach Babylon:
1) The Euphrates is dredged and otherwise improved for large ships to travel the approximately 370 miles upriver directly to Babylon.

- 2) Large ships anchor in the gulf and transfer their cargo to shallow-draft barges which shuttle upriver to the city.
- 3) A shipping port on the coast, which remains strictly secondary to the city, services the ships while goods travel by land to the city.

18:18-19 - shipmasters lament

- [shipmasters lament](#)

Like the kings and merchants, the shipmasters had also become wealthy through Babylon's trade. The three-fold pattern of lamentation (kings, merchants, shipmasters) emphasizes the *completeness* of her destruction.

18:20 rejoice O heaven

- [rejoice... you holy apostles and prophets](#)

Jeremiah prophesied that in the day that God destroyed Babylon *the heavens and the earth and all that is in them shall sing joyously over Babylon (Jer. 51:48)*. Jeremiah spoke this over the *literal city on the Euphrates* and it cannot be fulfilled anywhere else! See our discussion on [Babylon is Babylon!](#)

- [God has avenged you on her](#)

The city is guilty of the blood of the saints ([Rev. 17:6](#); [19:2](#)). In her is found *the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth (Rev. 18:24)*. The city is no different from the Harlot, both are one and the same persecutors of the saints.

18:21 - a millstone into the sea

- [took up a great millstone and threw it into the sea](#)

The angel reenacts the declaration which Jeremiah instructed Seraiah to read over the literal city on the Euphrates:

" So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, 'When you arrive [in Babylon](#) and see it, and read all these words, then you shall say, " O LORD, You have spoken against [this place](#) to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever. " Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into [the Euphrates](#). Then you shall say, " Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary. " ' Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. " ([Jer. 51:60-64](#)).

18:22 - a silent city

- [took up a great millstone and threw it into the sea](#)

Various occupations within the city are listed together with a strong double-negative indicating the impossibility of them ever being found again in Babylon. This underscores her uninhabitable and permanent destruction. See the discussion on [The Destruction of Babylon](#) where we discuss the severity and permanence of her *future* overthrow.

18:23 - by your sorcery

- [for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived](#)

"Sorcery" is *pharmake'ia* : sorcery, magic, magic arts, the use of drugs of any kind for magical

effect. Isaiah lists her sorceries which include: *enchantments, astrology, star-gazing, monthly prognostication*. (Have you seen her sorceries in your local newspaper and at the check-out stand of your grocery store? We are drinking from her cup!) The city is like Jezebel of Thyatira: having known *the depths of Satan* ([Rev. 2:24](#) cf. [2K. 9:22](#)). Those who practice sorcery *have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone* ([Rev. 21:8](#)) and never enter the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 22:15](#)).

18:24 - the blood of all who were slain

- **in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and of all who were slain on the earth**
"Who were slain" is *esphragme'non* : ones having been violently murdered. The **city** , not a separate Harlot system, is guilty of all religious persecution. She is the mother of all harlots ([Rev. 17:5](#)). Her global influence results in her global responsibility for the godly slain of the earth throughout history. The blood of her daughter harlots ([Luke 11:47-51](#); [Acts 7:52](#); [1Th. 2:15](#)) is put to her account. At the bottom of her cup is the blood of Abel and her cup continues to fill to this very hour!

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).