

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 10TH, 2019 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 18 is the death announcement (or the "funeral dirge") for Babylon the Great- the last great human civilization and wicked city of earth.

FALLEN IS BABYLON (18:1-3)

This chapter continues the vision of chapter 17, and records what 3 angels have to say about "Babylon's" end.

- There are 2 vantage-points for Babylon's fall- the heavenly perspective (v. 1-8) and the earthly perspective (v.9-24).
- Chapter 18 is a "dirge" (a funeral song) that laments the fall of the final evil city of humanity.

The first angel "made the earth bright" with his glory (similar to Luke 2:9), and had "great authority" from God.

- He makes a powerful declaration- all human civilization as a whole has come to an end.
- All that is left is evil spirits- v2 doesn't present a theology of "haunted buildings", but it simply shows the demonic influence of the city and the fact that humans will be completely removed.

Verse 3 provides the reasons that this great city and influencer of culture must fall and be judged.

- First, "all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality".
- This city will influence the entire world to sin, be idolatrous, and worship the Antichrist.
- Those with great influence will be held responsible for how that influence is stewarded!

Secondly, Babylon must fall because "the king of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her".

- This means that in the last days, the leaders of the world will follow the Antichrist and worship him (13:8).
- Finally, Babylon must fall because the "merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living"

This pictures materialism, comfort, and sensual gratification as having the power to bring wealth to those who offer services that appeal to humanity's "lusts of the flesh".

- This isn't a condemnation of business, commerce, and trade, only commerce and trade done unethically, unjustly, and at the expense of "human souls" (vs. 13).

REAPING DESTRUCTION (18:4-8)

Another angel issues a warning to the people of God to "come out of her".

- At this point, all Christians are already removed from the earth, so this is figurative and an instruction to the reader.
- This is a warning for God's people to remove themselves from "Antichrist culture".
- This doesn't mean we literally shun urban life or modern technology.

Scripture doesn't teach Christians to be isolated and never engage in culture a whole.

- Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:15-16 to not isolate ourselves, but to "let our lights shine" before people so they can see God in us.
- However, scripture does tell us to be careful not to engage in elements of culture that are sinful, immoral, godless, and idolatrous (2 Cor. 6:14-16)

The angels declare that this city and culture will be repaid double for her deeds (vs. 6)- all of the injustice, corruption, and violence against God's people result in a double judgment.

- What we plant will grow into something and we will "reap what we sow" (Gal. 6:7).
- The beautiful thing about grace is that we can still receive God's forgiveness and redemption in spite of what we've sown!

The Bible says "pride goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18), and here we see it is no different.

- V7 mentions 3 boastful statements of this wicked city.
- "I sit as queen"-showing it will be the finest city in existence.
- "I'm not a widow"- showing that "all the worlds' kings" will be her "lovers".

"I will never mourn"- showing that she believed that SHE was the one in control of her destiny.

- For this arrogance, her end will be swift (vs. 8).
- It would've been difficult for John's readers to imagine the "Babylon" of their day (Rome) falling- but it did.
- This is a reminder that human civilization, in all of its wonder and glory, is temporary.

MATERIALISM MOURNED (18:9-20)

In this part of the "funeral dirge", we hear 3 groups affected by Babylon's fall-

1. **Kings:** Modern day political and religious leaders.
2. **Merchants:** Corrupt business owners, salesmen, and the marketplace.
3. **Mariners:** Modern day movers of product, brokers, and deliverers of products that capitalize on humanity's lusts and desires.

Imagine each of these groups witnessing the destruction of this great city.

- There is a realization that their way of life is ending and that the torment that has come upon this city will also happen to them.
- These 3 groups (Kings, Merchants, Mariners) mourn via a 3-part dirge ("Woe, Woe"; crying out to the city; acknowledging how quickly it ends)

The kings will mourn because they realize that this is the end to their reign and great wealth.

- We get a picture of how power will corrupt world leaders in the last days- no thought of anyone but themselves!
- The merchants will mourn because no-one will buy about cargo anymore (vs. 11).
- The vanity of materialism will be exposed.

The list of marketplace items in vs. 12-13 symbolize modern markets as well.

- Jewelry, clothing, furniture, interior design, fragrances, food, animals (vehicles for transportation), and human slaves.
- These are the things people will worship and die for!
- The Mariners mourn because their trade is gone as well-water is gone and so is Babylon.

The doom of Babylon is examined from a very different perspective in v20.

- Believers are told to "rejoice", not lament the destruction of evil.
- Not that we are to rejoice in human suffering, but we rejoice in that what is opposed to God will come to end.
- There's a reason why this is difficult for many modern Christians to stomach...

A CULTURE DESTROYED (18:21-24)

John now sees a "mighty angel" pick up a millstone and toss it in the sea as a symbol.

- This illustrates that the city and culture that was opposed to God and oppressed and killed God's people will sink like a heavy stone.
- It also symbolizes that this is permanent- "it will be found no more".
- God is judging because a large injustice has taken place.

God is love, but God is also just- imagine our own children being slaughtered!

- Not only will all materialism and political power fall, v22 shows that culture will fall as well.
- The entertainment people live for, the music that shapes our beliefs and values, and the art that's been used for evil instead of good will all be destroyed.

The place that so much of humanity has called home will also lose its light (v23).

- All of the comforts of domestic life will come to an end, and the family structure will also collapse ("groom and bride never heard again").
- As marriage, the home, and the family continue to be redefined and distorted in these last days, we have to remember that God will ultimately judge this wickedness.

All of these institutions were designed to work for God's glory and the good of all people- but humanity in their sin has distorted them.

- Business, commerce, art, and family are designed to be catalysts for God's Kingdom, but they were "seduced" by false teaching and distorted by sin.
- Now this city and culture must pay the price for misleading so many and killing the followers of God (vs. 24).

WHAT IS SEEN IS TEMPORARY

- This world- even with all of its glory, beauty, and culture- is passing away.
- Culture, comfort, pleasure and material wealth are not inherently evil, but they often come at too high a price- slavery of humanity's souls and hostility to God's ways.
- We must guard our souls from becoming seduced by the lies of materialism.

THE MYTH OF MATERIALISM

- **Myth #1:** Peace and Contentment can be Attained by what You Own.
- **Myth #2:** Only the Rich Struggle with Greed, Consumerism, and Materialism.
- **Myth #3:** As a Christian, if I work hard for my money, I can do whatever it is I want

"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE..." (WE'RE CALLED TO LEAVE BEHIND THE IDEAS THAT...)

"Just because I want it, I need to have it." "If it feels good, do it!" "As long as it's making money- the ends justifies the means." "Popularity, beauty, and material success will last forever."