

The Book of Revelation Lesson 21 - Revelation 18

1. Chapter 17 – Babylon

1.1. The dragon, which was Satan, was introduced in **chapter 12**.

1.1.1. Satan is pictured to us as a beast. We find the forces of Satan are also shown in terms of being beasts; literally, "wild beasts," an indication of the fierceness and lack of care Satan has for the well-being of man.

1.1.2. Satan must use resources; he has to use men in furthering his purpose.

1.1.3. The warning given by the Lord to the disciples was to "beware of men" (**Matt. 10:17**).

1.1.4. He must work through men.

1.2. The beasts

1.2.1. The beast out of the sea represents the persecuting power of Satan operating in and through nations of this world and their governments.

1.2.2. The beast out of the earth represents all false religions and false philosophies that have plagued, and will continue to plague, the church.

1.2.3. Satan is the deceiver of the whole earth (**Rev. 12:9**), and we are told that the whole world "lieth in wickedness" (**1 John 5:19**)

1.2.4. Satan has a worldwide influence.

1.2.5. The whole of the earth is affected by Satan and his work.

1.3. Now a third helper is introduced which is the harlot, Babylon.

1.3.1. She represents the seduction of the world and Christians by the power of lusts, materialism and worldliness.

1.3.2. This chapter tells of the nature and history of the great harlot, Babylon. One of the seven angels comes to John and tells him that he will show him the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters.

1.3.3. John is carried away in the Spirit into the wilderness, and there John sees this woman seated upon the beast and he describes her. She is not to be confused with the woman in chapter twelve who represents God's people of the Old and New Covenant. This woman is the harlot Babylon.

1.3.4. Upon her forehead is written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. She was drunk with the blood of the saints. When John saw this, he did not understand. Then the angel seeing John's bewilderment explains to him the meaning of the harlot. She represents the forces that entice and lead the children of God astray with her lusts and worldly pleasures. Finally, the beast shall turn against the harlot and the people who serve her.

1.3.5. But the Christ will come and will conquer, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

2. Chapter 18 – Babylon's Destruction

2.1. This chapter shows the inevitable, complete and irrevocable character of Babylon's fall. The fall of Babylon is announced in terms as if it had already been accomplished because its fall is so certain. It is so utterly destroyed that even the birds and unclean spirits think it a prison. It shows that the kings and the merchants who had waxed rich with her fell when she fell.

- 2.2. John hears another voice, which called forth God's people from the place of the city. This simply means for them not to be partakers of her sins. She is pronounced to receive the most severe punishment that the Lord can offer upon her. Three different groups which had waxed rich off this great city, remember the great riches and luxury which once existed in the city, but now the city is utterly destroyed. The destruction of the city is complete.
- 2.3. The last paragraph indicates the completeness of the destruction. The city shall never rise up again. A strong angel took as it were a millstone and dropped it into the sea, showing that it is final. The phrase **no more at all** occurs six times in this short passage which shows the complete destruction even more fully. The things they had will be no more. Babylon was responsible for the blood of the saints. The prayers of the saints have been answered; they have been avenged. It looked as though the proud city would never fall, and yet, when by the power of God she fell, the fall was so great that she would never rise up again. This doom is complete at the final judgment day.
- 2.4. As Babylon was the captor of God's people in the Old Testament, the harlot (seduction of the world) entices those who try to be faithful to God.
- 2.5. **WORLDLINESS** may be the greatest power the Devil has over the children of God.
- 2.5.1. Worldliness is a word that most people don't even use.
- 2.5.2. Perhaps that is because it describes a manner of being so common-place among the world's majority that they perceive it as "business as usual" rather than some sort of departure from God's standard of right.
- 2.5.3. Sometimes people say, "I don't see anything wrong with it" (whatever "it" is), without reference to the Bible.
- 2.6. We are not surprised to see worldliness in the world, although it may distress us to be surrounded by its more extreme forms (**1 Corinthians 5:9-13**).
- 2.7. We often recite the old saying that we should be "in the world, but not of the world."
- 2.8. However, when--and to the extent--that worldliness overtakes the church or those individual members of it, Christ's cause suffers damage and souls are lost.
- 2.9. Further, as the church (individually or collectively) becomes worldly it loses its relationship with God and its right to exist separate from the world.
- 2.9.1. It has become indistinguishable.
- 2.9.2. It is one with the world.
- 2.9.3. It is worldly!
3. **Rev. 18:1 - After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory.**
- 3.1. That which is in the presence of God is a light unto the world.
- 3.1.1. **1 John 1:5 - And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**
- 3.2. The fall of Babylon is described in language similar to that in the Old Testament of the Babylon of the Medo-Persian Empire (**Isaiah 13, 14; Jeremiah 50 and 51**), and of the fall of Tyre (**Ezekiel 26, 27 and 28**). While John had the city of Rome in mind, the teaching is all who are opposed to God in pride, lust, worldliness, luxury, pleasure and corruption are included.

4. **Rev. 18:2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.**
- 4.1. The angel announced the fall of Babylon. He used past tense because of the certainty of its fall. Instead of the great busy, bustling city, it will become a desert place, a place where the demons dwell, and where every unclean spirit and all kinds of unclean and hateful birds dwell. This indicates the desolation. It is not to be inhabited by men. It will be a foreboding place instead of one that attracts and allures. It will be filled with unclean things in opposition to the great city of God in which no unclean thing may dwell (**Revelation 22:15**).
5. **Rev. 18:3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.**
- 5.1. The reason for her fall is given. She was not content in sinning herself, but she enticed and encouraged others to sin with her. Fornication is an Old Testament term meaning that men were unfaithful to God and turned to idols. The kings entered into alliances based upon lust, corruption and power. The merchants built business upon earthly gains and lusts. Remember Rome represents this spirit of worldliness and lust throughout the Christian Age. Governments and businesses today many times are operated upon the principle of selfishness, lusts, corruption and immorality. These will all be defeated in the end by God. These are our Babylons today.
- 5.2. The King James Version translates “power of her wantonness” with the “abundance of her delicacies.”
- 5.2.1. Delicacies comes from the Greek strenos (stray-nos) which means excessive strength which longs to break forth, over strength, luxury, eager desire
- 5.3. Throughout history, sin has found a home in men when they are enticed by worldly power, greed, lust, etc.
- 5.3.1. **James 1:13-17 - Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death. Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.**
- 5.4. We live in a world where the principles of selfishness, lust, corruption and immorality are abundant. These will all be defeated in the end by God.
- 5.4.1. As we saw in **chapter 17**, the alliance between Babylon and the beasts is one that resembles a fornicating relationship.
- 5.4.2. Satan uses all resources at his disposal to lure people away from God.
6. **Rev. 18:4-5**
- 6.1. **Rev. 18:4 - And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:**
- 6.1.1. The voice from heaven at first sounds like it must be God's, but in the next verse God is mentioned in the third person.

6.1.2. The call is to come out of Babylon and have no fellowship with her sins. This call is not to physically come out of the city of Rome, because anywhere one went in the Roman Empire, there would be the same sin of worldliness, lust and greed.

6.1.3. The call was to be separate from the world and not commit the sins of the world as Paul stated in **2 Corinthians 6:17**. Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. This is still a pressing problem today.

6.2. Rev. 18:5 - for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6.2.1. The imagery is that the sins have been piled one upon another until they reached unto heaven. And it is pointed out that God does not forget the evil that men do.

6.2.2. From the human standpoint it seems like man is getting away with wickedness, but verses like this remind that God remembers and will punish the evildoers.

7. Rev. 18:6-7

7.1. Rev. 18:6 - Render unto her even as she rendered, and double [unto her] the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.

7.1.1. Babylon is to be punished in the exact amount that she deserves in accordance with the principles of **Matthew 7:2** and **Galatians 6:7-8**. Babylon will receive the double according to her works. This does not mean she will receive twice as much punishment as she deserves; but she will receive the exact amount of punishment, which she has earned. The punishment is the double, the counterpart of the sin. The fall and punishment of Babylon here is very similar to that of **Isaiah 47:7-9**.

7.1.2. **In the cup** in which she enticed others to commit fornication with her, the wrath of God is poured out upon her.

7.2. Rev. 18:7 How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning.

7.2.1. She is to receive torment and mourning, as she deserves. She had boasted in arrogant pride that it would never happen to her, but God declared that it would happen in accordance with the principle laid down in **Luke 14:11**.

7.2.2. That which opposes God is arrogant.

7.2.3. Evil, whether it involves physical persecution or not, will be repaid "double."

7.2.3.1. **Matt. 7:2 - For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.**

7.2.3.2. **Gal. 6:7-9 - Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**

8. Rev. 18:8 - Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her.

8.1. Her destruction will come swiftly. This destruction will come in one day. She will be destroyed by death, mourning, famine and fire. God is able and capable of destroying her, and he will destroy her. Her destruction will be because she deserved it.

9. **Rev. 18:9-20**

9.1. **Rev. 18:9 - And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning,**

9.1.1. John tells about the destruction of the city and mentions three groups who lament over her destruction. The laments are similar to those in Ezekiel 27 over Tyre. The three groups who lament are the kings, the merchants, the shipmasters and sailors. First, **the kings of the earth** who have committed illicit alliances with her weep and wail as they behold her burning. None of these are pictured as loving the city herself, but only for what they could get out of her. They are sad to see her go because it will hurt and affect them.

9.2. **Rev. 18:10 - standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.**

9.2.1. The kings stand afar off; they do not rush to her rescue. They do not want to be involved in her torment. They see her as the great and strong city. She was great and strong, but God is greater and stronger.

9.2.2. Instead of one day as in verse 8, it is now one hour. Also, the kings speak of her judgment showing they recognize the justice of what is happening. She is getting what she deserved. One hour denotes suddenly, quickly. They are astonished that it happened so quickly.

9.3. **Rev. 18:11 - And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more;**

9.3.1. **The merchants** weep and moan because of the fall of Rome. They do not weep for Babylon, but rather they weep because there is no place to sell their goods. They had entered into wrong alliances to sell their goods, and now that is gone. They have been hit in the pocketbook and they mourn.

9.4. **Rev. 18:12 - merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble;**

9.5. **Rev. 18:13 - and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and [merchandise] of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men.**

9.5.1. Beginning in verse 12, John provides for us a list of “products” that can be broken up into 6 groups. These items are examples of the luxury and materialistic goods. Those John was writing to would understand these are items of great expense to come by.

9.5.1.1. Group 1 - Precious metals and gems.

9.5.1.2. Group 2 - Fabrics for expensive clothing.

9.5.1.3. Group 3 - Ornamental pieces.

9.5.1.4. Group 4 - Aromatic

9.5.1.5. Group 5 - Articles of food.

9.5.1.6. Group 6 - Property

9.5.2. Those which live their lives for thing allurements of this world will quickly understand how foolish and fruitless their lives have been. What is obtained on this earth will be quickly destroyed (v. 19)

- 9.5.2.1. **Matt. 6:19-21 - Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.**
- 9.6. **Rev. 18:14 - And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and [men] shall find them no more at all.**
- 9.6.1. Luxuries are a thing of the past. Fruits refer to the exotic foodstuffs. Dainty and sumptuous refer to the expensive clothing and furniture. These are all gone. The wealth of ancient Rome was well-known. The harlot is seen as the allurements of the world and material things that tempt men to seek them instead of the true riches in Christ Jesus (**Matthew 6:33**).
- 9.7. **Rev. 18:15 - The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning;**
- 9.8. **Rev. 18:16 - saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl!**
- 9.9. **Rev. 18:17 - for in an hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any wither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off,**
- 9.10. **Rev. 18:18 - and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What [city] is like the great city?**
- 9.11. **Rev. 18:19 - And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.**
- 9.12. **Rev. 18:20 - Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.**
- 9.12.1. The merchants stand afar off and mourn. They do not rush to help because they are afraid they will be caught up in the destruction. These merchants were made rich by her, but now their gain is all gone. They mourn not for the city, but because their profit with her is gone.
- 9.12.2. They mourn the great city. Whereas the kings mourn because of her might, the merchants mourn because of her great wealth as indicated by what she wore.
- 9.12.3. They are astonished that in one hour all the great riches are made desolate. This is a warning to those who trust in material wealth. It will perish. The only worthwhile thing to trust in is God and his word. The **shipmaster** refers to the pilot or helmsmen. **Everyone that saileth any whither** refers to passengers. **Mariners** refer to all the sailors who operate ships. As many as gain their living by the sea refers to all of these plus any related with them such as the men on shore, who help to run the ship lines. It would also include fishermen and ship builders. Again, these like the kings and merchants stood afar off.
- 9.12.4. They were mournful as they saw the great city burn. They ask in amazement, **What city is like the great city?**

- 9.12.5. In addition to mourning, they cast dust on their heads. Reminds one of **Ezekiel 27:30**. They were sad because the city in which they had made their riches was gone. And they were astonished because it happened so quickly - in one hour.
- 9.12.6. Those who had committed sin and gotten rich off the harlot were sad to see her destroyed. However, those who love God and love righteousness and have been afflicted by the forces of Satan rejoice to see good triumph and evil defeated.
- 9.12.7. These things that caused the downfall of Babylon did not happen accidentally; they were the result of the judgment of God. God judged her according to what she had done and what she had done to the saints. It was right that she be destroyed, otherwise evil would triumph over good. But the redeemed are called upon to rejoice because good has triumphed over evil. In the end, this will always be so. Another enemy of Christ and the church received what they deserve.
10. **Rev. 18:21 - And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.**
- 10.1. The destruction of all that opposes God will be complete, decisive and final
- 10.2. To illustrate in a dramatic way the complete overthrow of Babylon, John sees a great angel who casts a millstone into the sea, which sinks to the bottom never to rise again. In like manner, Babylon will be cast down never to rise again. This reminds one of **Jeremiah 51:64** where Jeremiah instructed Seraiah to take the book in which he had written all the evil that Babylon had done and read it in Babylon. Then when he had finished reading, he was to bind a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again" (**Jeremiah 59:64**).
11. **Rev. 18:22-23**
- 11.1. **Rev. 18:22 - And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in thee;**
- 11.1.1. All amusement and recreation cease as indicated by the harpers, minstrels and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all. All business life will cease as indicated by no craftsman and craft shall be found any more. All home life and daily living will cease as indicated by the stilling of the mill. The expression **heard no more at all** is found six times in this context.
- 11.2. **Rev. 18:23 - and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived.**
- 11.2.1. The lights in the houses and businesses will go out never to go on again. Marriage and giving in marriage will cease. Both of these refer to the routine of living in a city.
- 11.2.2. It becomes wrong when riches become men's god and they do things wrong in order to obtain them. This is what is intended here. Second, Babylon had deceived the nations of the world. She had bewitched them into laying up

treasures upon the earth rather than laying up treasures in heaven as Jesus commanded in **Matthew 6:19-20**.

11.2.3. It is not wrong to have things, but when things become the most important aspects of our life instead of God, they become wrong. This is the sin of Babylon.

12. Rev. 18:24 - And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

12.1. The harlot has slain a great many Christians. She enjoys it. She delights in it.

12.2. She is punished because she is guilty of all that have been slain upon the earth. Especially emphasized were the prophets and saints.

12.3. The attitudes of greed, hate and lust are responsible for the murders of the righteous as well as all men. Again, let it be understood that the first century Christians would think of Rome, which indeed it includes. But it is speaking of the anti-Christian world, which seeks to tempt, seduce and lead men away from Christ to material pleasure.

12.4. In this larger sense, this will continue until the end of time when Jesus comes and the harlot Babylon will be completely overthrown. This is the overall meaning and thus had meaning for them in the first century as well as meaning for Christians today.