

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #52
8/29/2007

**The Explanatory Interlude of Chapter Eighteen: Commercial Babylon
Part 1**

Because the last verse of Chapter Seventeen transitions into Chapter Eighteen with the statement, **“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth,”** before moving into Chapter Eighteen it is important to review what we have just studied.

“The mystery of the great whore,” ... **“the woman sitting upon the scarlet colored beast,”** ... **“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”** identified **“Babylon”** as representing all false religions, all those who, for whatever reason, had not given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition” of 17:8 is the same as **“the beast”** of 13:1 and **is identified as Anti-Christ who is empowered by Satan.** He rules for a brief time as the world ruler of Chapter Thirteen and is presented in Chapter Seventeen as **“the seventh mountain”** (vs. 9) and **“the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition”** (vs. 11).

“The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast” (vs. 12) are ten rulers during the **last half of the Tribulation Period** who are empowered by **Anti-Christ** and assist him in his dictatorial rule over the earth. They, acting in behalf of **Anti-Christ**, destroy the false church and ecclesiastical system that is energized and supported by **Anti-Christ** during the first half of the Tribulation Period: **“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire”** (vs. 16). After the false ecclesiastical system is destroyed by these henchmen of **Anti-Christ**, the worship of **Anti-Christ** is the religion of the world as pictured in 13:13-15 and prophesied in 2 Thess. 2:4 and Dan. 11:36-37.

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (vs. 18). **“That great city”** presents **“Babylon”** as a real, actual city in preparation for the message of Chapter Eighteen as a contrast to Chapter Seventeen’s presentation of **“Babylon”** as symbolic.

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Notice how we are introduced to Chapter Eighteen:

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”

“After these things,” meta tauta, indicates a transition. The same phrase was used to introduce Chapter Four and Chapter Seven and will introduce Chapter Nineteen. **After what things?** — After the presentation in Chapter Sixteen of the **seven bowls of God’s wrath** and the presentation of **“the great whore”** in Chapter Seventeen of Babylon as representative of false religion, its nature and its destiny.

The description of the **seven bowls of God’s wrath** in Chapter Sixteen was comparatively brief. Chapter Eighteen gives us some of the details of their effects upon the Christ-rejecting world, particularly the commercial aspects. The effects of those horrendous judgments have a devastating effect upon the world. All unbelievers must deal with the pain of the incurable and untreated sores of the first judgment while trying to handle the situations resulting from the other judgments: (2) the poisoning of all of the salt water and killing of all of the sea creatures; (3) the poisoning of all of the fresh water sources; (4) the unbearable heat of the atmosphere being increased seven-fold; (5) the strange and powerful darkness that covered the seat of the beast, Babylon, producing such pain that men gnawed their tongues in pain; (6) the manipulation and drawing power of the evil spirits escaping from the dried-up Euphrates; and (7) finally, that awesome earthquake and hail.

These are the conditions present when we begin to read God’s judgment upon commercial **“Babylon”** in Chapter Eighteen. In these verses God describes for us the havoc, pain and trauma wrought upon the commercial interests of this world by His judgments. God tells us of this in James 5:1-3: **“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”** A preview of this time of judgment is also presented in Revelation 14. When Chapter Eighteen concludes God will be finished with the presentation and explanation of His judgments. Then He introduces the return of our Lord and King in Chapter Nineteen with the familiar phrase of transition, **“After these things”**

Revelation 18:1-2

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

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“Another angel come down from heaven, having great power” signals that which is before us is a very important matter, one requiring a different angel to whom has been entrusted with an unusual amount of authority. A visual indication of this authority is expressed by the glory of the angel. **“The seat of the beast,”** which had been enveloped in the darkness of the fifth bowl of God’s wrath is suddenly illuminated with this brilliant light as if to announce the sudden appearance of God’s special servant.

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying ...” This angel has a dreadful and ominous message to deliver which will produce a sense of fear and helplessness previously unknown.

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen ...” is the awesome and fearful pronouncement of God’s final judgment upon this wicked world. To emphasize it, it is stated twice — **“fallen, is fallen.”** The remaining verses of this chapter will elaborate upon the implications of this brief but powerful and simple, but profound statement. Its certainty has been foretold a number of times over many years by God’s prophets. What they have prophesied is now to be experienced as reality.

Even though the pronouncement of judgments by the prophet Jeremiah against Babylon were mixed between the historical events of his day and the last days which are described in **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**, Isaiah’s prophetic pronouncements were made apart from those historical events, even hundreds of years before Jeremiah’s day. For instance from Isaiah Thirteen we read:

“The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see ... Howl ye for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty ... Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.”** (1, 6, 9-13) ... **“And Babylon, the glory of

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kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there" (vv. 19-20).

Again, from Isaiah 47 we even read some statements which are quoted here in Revelation Eighteen along with other descriptions of judgment upon Babylon:

"Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate." (vs. 1); "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man." (vs. 3); "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms" (vs. 5); "And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments" (vv. 7-9).

Then God gives the reason for His stern and awful judgment upon Babylon:

"For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels.

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Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee” (vv. 10-15).

These are but a few key references to explain why Babylon is so deserving of the wrath of God that is presented so graphically in these passages. Not only has Babylon been the fountainhead of all idolatry, but countless other forms of rebellion against the Almighty God and His creation have also flowed from this spring of evil.

As has always been true, and always will be, when man separates himself from his Creator and rejects the Creator’s structure of how all created things are to relate to each other, those choices will always evolve into abuses of various kinds. God’s preordained way for each part of His creation to work in harmony and in mutual benefit for each of those parts must be followed or else chaos and abuse will result. Babylon presents the ultimate picture of those evil abuses.

When man refuses to accept his Creator’s self manifestation of Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ as his God (John 1:18; Colossians 2:9) and, therefore rejects God’s plan and provision for his redemption and freedom from the bondage of Satan, that man sets himself on a path of self-disillusionment and destruction. Such a man will always produce a culture and a society in which everything is ultimately distorted and abused, including the abuse of himself and all those around him. While alcohol and drugs enslave, abuse and destroy man, preventing him from achieving the purpose for which he was created, the destruction produced by these two aphrodisiacs pales when compared to the chaos that is produced by a diseased ego lusting for power and material possessions.

When such happens, life is turned upside down as men pursue and love things and then use and abuse people. The secularist, the atheist, the evolutionist, the agnostic and the idolater all produce similar results — a culture in which man abuses not only himself, but also everyone else around him. God has pictured the path in detail in Romans 1:18-32 and proclaims that such perverted sinners deserve His wrath. They shall receive it. The remainder of Chapter Eighteen describes these matters with stunningly painful details.