

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #56
10/24/2007

The Explanatory Interlude of Chapter Eighteen: Rejoicing in Heaven
Part 5

“**Rejoice,**” the first word in Chapter eighteen, verse twenty, is a welcome change. It’s just one word, but it is refreshing and welcome and suggestive of the wonderful things which we shall read about in Chapter nineteen. These last few verses of Chapter eighteen give us a brief description of God’s total destruction of Babylon, Satan’s headquarters in this wicked and godless world. We shall read them with a sense of relief that the role of Babylon and its evil controlling influence is “no more.”

However, before we proceed we should pause and reflect upon what God has been describing to us.

In Chapter fourteen verse six, God begins describing the very last events of His judgment upon this Christ-rejecting world. The fourteenth verse of Chapter fourteen showed us the Son of man, sitting upon a white cloud having upon His head a golden crown, symbolizing His authority over all of creation and in His hand a sharp sickle of judgment. Verse sixteen then summarized this entire passage about judgment by saying: **“And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”** All that we have read since that verse can be classified as God’s explanation of various aspects of this reaping of the earth.

Chapters fifteen and sixteen present the last series of judgments, expressing the most awful and devastating of all. These **“bowl judgments”** happen quickly, are more awful than anything ever experienced on this earth and are accumulative in their effects until the very end. This means that, even as we read of what happens in these very last verses, the effects of each of these **“bowl judgments”** is still being felt and affecting the evil inhabitants of this earth.

Chapter seventeen is about Babylon, not Rome, for it concerns the role of how Satan uses idolatry, false religion, and pseudo-Christianity, as a means to deceive mankind. This perverting of worship from the Creator and redirecting it to His arch enemy, Satan, began in an organized fashion with the Tower of Babel in Genesis eleven, and has continued in various forms down through the ages. In Chapter seventeen God further amplifies how, by using his stooges, **Anti-Christ and the False Prophet,** Satan is able to lead multitudes of people to worship the illusionary image of **“the beast”** as presented in Chapter thirteen, verses twelve through fifteen. Therefore, Chapter seventeen fits into the midpoint of the **“seven-year tribulation period.”**

Chapter eighteen continues a description of God’s destruction of rebuilt Babylon which seemingly becomes Satan’s earthly headquarters during the **seven-year Tribulation Period.** In so doing, God tells us how His judgment upon Babylon affects the rulers of this world and their commercial interests.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

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While Chapter seventeen is properly placed at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, **the events described in Chapter eighteen fit in the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period and bring us to the conclusion of Satan's dominance in this world.**

A proper view of these things helps us to understand why the word **"Rejoice"** suddenly appears. Though God is not quite finished with His description of Babylon's destruction, the residents of Heaven are now able to see the end. The tone changes dramatically. Like the first rays of light breaking through the darkness to signal the end of a dark and stormy night and assuring the coming of the light of day heralded by the chirping of the birds, a new command is heard; **"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."** As the residents of the earth lament the passing of all that they have loved, the residents of heaven begin a time of rejoicing that will last for eternity.

Believing that God dictated each word, written by John the scribe, in this Revelation of Jesus Christ, as well as the construction thereof, it is significant to note that this is a command in the present tense, which denotes something that continues. We are not told who issues this command. Some say that it is the angel who makes the announcement of verses one and two. Others say it is John. It is more likely that it is the Lord Himself even as in verse four He commanded; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Assuming that it the Lord Who issues this command, He specifies three groups.

First, "heaven," is specified as meaning all who are now in heaven are commanded to rejoice. Back in Chapter six, when the Lord opened the fifth seal on that scroll which is the title deed to the earth, we read about a group of martyrs in verses nine through eleven: **"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."** These are most certainly recipients of this command. Now, they can start to experience a joy that shall never end. Surely they would not be the only ones included for all in heaven would now have reason to rejoice.

Second, the Lord specifically directs His command to the **"holy apostles."** Each one of them, with the exception of John the writer, would have given their lives in the service of their King. Having gladly given their lives in their service to their Lord they are now rewarded with joy.

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Third, the Lord also specifically directed His command to His faithful **“prophets.”** Down through the centuries they had faithfully proclaimed His warnings to the disobedient and sinful sons of Jacob. They had preached His Words of love and mercy until their hearts had broken and their tears had run down their faces — mostly with little acceptance on the part of the unrepentant. For example, Noah, who proclaimed God’s warning and calls for repentance for 120 years, Jeremiah, who confronted the lying prophets and priests as he faithfully proclaimed God’s warnings, and Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Jonah, and all the rest of God’s faithful mouthpieces, who proclaimed His Word in the most difficult and unresponsive situations, receive one more command: **“Rejoice!”**

Finally there is joy to overflow their hearts — joy long delayed, but joy that never ends! Countless faithful servants and prophets of God were the recipients of this wonderful command.

“... others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Hebrews 11:35-39).

After the command to **“Rejoice”** the Lord continues with His description of His final destruction of Babylon: **“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”**

The simile would have been more meaningful to the immediate recipients of The Revelation of Jesus Christ than it is to us today. A “millstone” was used to crush grain. It separated the husks from the heart so the useless husks could be thrown away and, used as this picture of what God does, symbolizes the violence with which God destroys Satan’s capital and all that is associated with it.

“And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee.” The entertainers, the craftsmen and all who were a part of “normal activities”

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would no longer exist. In a violent moment they are **“no more.”** They simply don't exist anymore. They are gone forever! Life as they were used to exists **“no more.”**

Some people over the years have questioned how this description of events could apply to Babylon which in this day is located several hundred miles inland. However, even as God had the authority to dry up the Euphrates so that the army of 200,000,000 could come across (9:15-17), and prevent any rain from falling for three and one half years (11:6), He also has the ability to fulfill what He said through the mouth of Jeremiah and cause the waters of the sea to engulf the area around Babylon. Please take note of the prophecy of Jeremiah which speaks of this event:

***“Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!
The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the
multitude of the waves thereof. And it shall be, when thou
hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt
bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:
And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall
not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they
shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah”***
(Jeremiah 51:41-42, 63-64).

Apparently, from what God said through the mouth of Jeremiah, God intends to cover Babylon with water as He sinks her into the depths so that she cannot be seen or found. Like so many other things, God does not explain how He does something. He simply tells us what He does. He has never lied nor will He ever lie to man or deceive anyone. He simply tells us what He does. He has no obligations to explain His methods to us.

“And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee” seems to indicate that by this time all sources of power have been interrupted by the various plagues and the great earthquake and the only light available would be from candles, and, for the fifth time, for emphasis, the refrain **“no more”** is repeated. **“No more”** light would ever be seen shining in this once great city that would exist **“no more.”**

Before He concludes this final description of the pouring out of His wrath, God one more time draws attention to the role of deceit practiced by Satan and his religious frauds, **“for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”** Satan would have very few, if any, followers, if he ever presented the truth, so that he has to lie and deceive and is an expert at doing so.

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” With a great final statement that sums it all up, the Lord concludes all that needs to be said about His judgment upon the wicked prior to His victorious return to reclaim His earth.