

Text: Rev 18.1-24

Outline of Revelation:

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev 9)
 - f. (Parenthesis): Voices in heaven (Rev 10)
 - g. (Parenthesis): The Two Witnesses | the seventh trumpet (Rev 11)
 - h. (Parenthesis): The Long War Against God¹ (Rev 12)
 - i. (Parenthesis): The Beasts (Rev 13)
 - j. (Parenthesis): Triumph of the Saints foreseen (Rev 14)
 - k. (Prelude): Another Sign in Heaven (Rev 15)
 - l. The bowl judgements (Rev 16)
 - m. (Parenthesis): Fall of Religious Babylon (Rev 17)
 - n. (Parenthesis): Fall of Political Babylon (Rev 18)**

Last week we talked about the destruction of the religious system that will give rise to the power of the Antichrist. Rev 17 is seen as religious Babylon for the following reasons:

1. The great harlot is hated by the beast and ultimately destroyed by the beast (17.16)
2. The great harlot is carried by the beast until she is no longer useful to him (17.7, 16)
3. Harlotry is a Biblical symbol of apostasy (many passages)
4. The emphasis of chapter 18 is on commercial activity rather than on power

The destruction of Babylon the commercial center is seen in chapter 18:

I. Announcements from heaven (1-8)

A. A new scene in heaven (1)

1. After these things... the vision of ch. 17 complete, a new vision begins

¹ I borrow the title of Henry Morris' book of this same name for our chapter heading here.

2. Another angel... like the others of immediately preceding visions
 - a. One with great authority
 - b. One whose coming illuminates the earth with glory

Some have interpreted this to be Christ, but clearly, he is an angel of the class of angels so designated throughout these visions, but not one of the seven with the bowls (see 17.1).

B. The angel's announcement against Babylon (2-3)

1. Doom of Babylon (2)
 - a. Fallen, fallen ... repetition confirms certainty
 - b. Babylon the great... though connected to religious Babylon, this entity is distinct as we shall see
 - c. Her doom is to be a desolation – demons and birds... symbolic of utter desolation and ruin

“The woman in chapter 17 was associated with the political power but was not the political power itself, and her destruction apparently brought no mourning from the earth. By contrast the destruction of Babylon in chapter 18 brings loud lamentation from the earth's political and economic powers. Instead of being destroyed and consumed by the 10 kings, here the destruction seems to come from an earthquake, and it is probable that this is an enlarged explanation of what was described in 16:19–21.”²

2. Reason for judgement (3)
 - a. All the nations have been intoxicated with Babylon's immorality (apostasy, unbelief)
 - b. All the kings of the earth have entered into her immorality

² John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 973.

- c. All the merchants of the earth have enriched themselves by her sensuality [key difference from the vision of ch. 17]

Power and profit are her chief interests and the root of all her sins.

C. A voice calls to God's people (4-8)

1. Another voice... likely another angel (4)

- a. Calls for separation – avoid pollution and judgement
- b. A constant theme of Scripture, remember Lot's wife for example

2. Her sins have accumulated (5)

- a. As high as heaven... just as the tower of old she sought to build
- b. God has determined now to finally bring judgement on the long-tolerated system

3. The voice calls to God's agents: pay her back! (6-7)

- a. Pay back double... *i.e.*, fully
- b. To the degree she indulged herself, to the same degree bring mourning

4. The judgement is to be in 'one day' (8)

- a. Communicates suddenness
- b. Also, possibly literal in this terrifying time

II. Reaction to her judgement (9-20)

A. Lament of the kings (9-10)

1. These lamenting kings must be those who were in alliance with Babylon
2. They stand at a distance and mourn for the loss of their power

B. Lament of the merchants (11-17a)

1. They mourn the loss of their market for all kinds of goods (11-13)
2. All the luxuries these men enjoyed will be taken from them (14)
3. The merchants of the earth weep and mourn like the kings for the loss of their profit and possessions (15-17a)

“This obviously refers to an economic and political situation rather than a religious one.”³

C. Lament of the shippers (17b-19)

1. These too lament at the burning of the city
2. These have grown rich in the trade of shipping
3. They again emphasize the suddenness and completeness of the destruction

D. But rejoicing in heaven (20)

1. Those called to rejoice
 - a. Heaven
 - b. Saints
 - c. Apostles
 - d. Prophets
2. Because God has avenged them of the wrongs committed to them by the world

III. Final declaration of doom (21-24)

A. A symbolic declaration (21)

1. A great stone thrown into the sea: it cannot rise again
2. So, says the angel, is the doom of Babylon – it will never rise again

B. The things of Babylon that shall be no more (22-23a)

1. Music of her musicians
2. Arts of her craftsmen
3. Works of her manufacturers
4. Lights of her cities
5. Voices of her bridegrooms and her brides

C. Reasons for her judgement

1. Because her merchants and great men have deceived themselves and all men with the anti-God philosophy of Babylon (23b)

³ Walvoord, 973.

“She deceived all the nations into thinking that joy, security, honor, and meaning in life come through the accumulation of material wealth.”⁴

2. Because she is guilty of the blood of the saints (24)

Conclusion:

Constable's view:

“To summarize, it seems that the Babylon John described in this chapter is the commercial system of buying and selling goods to make a profit that includes capitalism. As religious Babylon includes all forms of religion (non-Christian as well as Christian religions), so economic Babylon includes all types of economies (capitalism, socialism, communism, etc.). This economic system will have its headquarters in Babylon on the Euphrates River during the Tribulation, and it will burn up. Self-interest is at the root of this system. Whereas believers have always lived within this system, we have always known that we must not adopt the philosophy that drives it, namely, selfishness. This system has become so much a part of life that it is hard for us to imagine life without it. Nonetheless this chapter teaches that it will end just before Jesus Christ returns at His second coming, and it will exist no longer. This system began when people first assembled to make a name for themselves at Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). As Christians, we need to make sure that we are not citizens of this Babylon, by laying up treasure on earth, but truly citizens of heaven, by laying up treasure there (cf. Matt. 6:19–21). This chapter should challenge us to evaluate our financial goals and to repudiate selfish living.”⁵

[Note: I am not certain that there *must* be a literal Babylon on the Euphrates, but certainly some central location will be the capital of the Antichrist, likely it is this that is destroyed.]

The destruction of the world system will, I believe, motivate the final assault on Jerusalem. The whole world will be in chaos.

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 18.22.

⁵ Constable, Rev 18.24.

“The events of chapter 17 will be fulfilled at the midpoint of the seven years, whereas the events of chapter 18 will occur at the end of the seven years, immediately before the second coming of Christ. The destruction of the city of Babylon is the final blow to the times of the Gentiles, which began when the Babylonian army attacked Jerusalem in 605 b.c. (cf. Luke 21:24).”⁶

The stage is now set for the return of the King.

⁶ Walvoord, “Revelation in BKCNT,” 973.