

The Fall of Babylon

Lesson 26

Wednesday, Dec 6, 2017

Text: Revelation 18:1-24

In this latter part of the book we are seeing God's judgment being enacted upon the enemies of his people. We just saw Rome represented as a harlot who sat upon many waters and also upon a beast. It was foretold that the very nations she rode upon would turn on her (Rev 17). In this chapter we will see that the great city of Babylon "has fallen". But what does this mean, since literal Babylon was no more, and we just saw Rome portrayed as a harlot, a beast, & waters? Why do some weep over and some rejoice over her fall?

A lot of the language of this chapter is taken from O.T. prophecies, so if you have time it will help you understand the language in *this* chapter to read the sections of Old Testament passages below. The reading IS lengthy, but makes the meaning of this section so much more clear. (But you don't have to read them as the more central verses from these texts are also noted in the questions below.)

Note that all of these passages refer to the evil that Babylon / Tyre has done, **(1)** against God's people and **(2)** in following idolatry. This is so intermixed with the empire that the empire and the evil are viewed as *the same*.

Ezek 26:1-13, 16-18 — Tyre's destruction foretold

Ezek 27:1-36 — Tyre's alliances with other nations (as in this chapter)

Isaiah 13:1, 17-22 — Destruction of Babylon by the Medes

Jer 50:1-3, 9, 13-16, 29-31, 46; Jer 51:1, 7-9, 45, 60, 63-64 — In several places judgment future is spoken of as already having happened; much of the imagery is seen in Rev 18

Before we can understand this chapter, we must first understand what **Babylon** represents, and also **when** the events talked of happen(ed). Isa 21:9 says "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" *Note that this was written some 150 years before Babylon fell!* Consider Isa 13:17-22 (above). But note that Babylon's utter

destruction did NOT occur with the Medo-Persian conquest, since they *inhabited* Babylon; the desolation did not occur for some 500 years. (See question 2 & 3).

Also, compare Jer 51:7-9 (above), to Rev 18:2-5.

- 1. A.** What 3 accusations are made against Babylon in Rev 18:3?
What 2 accusations are made against the Harlot in Rev 17:2?

 - B.** What is said of the Harlot in Rev 17:6?
What is said of Babylon in Rev 18:24?

 - C.** What was the Harlot wearing in Rev 17:4?
How was Babylon adorned in Rev 18:16?
 - D.** Who does the Harlot represent?
So who does Babylon represent in this chapter?
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- 2.** Jer 50-51 and other passages above speak of judgment as if it had already happened. So does Rev 18:2 mean *this* Babylon has *already* fallen? If not, what does it mean?
(See vs Rev 18:4, 20-21!)

3. Rev 18:8 says the destruction would come in “one day”, and that she would be burned up with fire. However, the saying that “Rome didn’t fall in a day” is true. Rome wasn’t burned down, nor was the city ever completely destroyed. In fact, modern-day Rome has a history of over 2500 years, and the present day city is built upon and around the ancient city. Some of the buildings and monuments are still standing.

How then could “Babylon” represent Rome? (Is this verse wrong? Or is Babylon another empire, not Rome?)

4. What does Rev 18:5 tells us about the sins? (See also Jer 51:9.)

Compare this to Romans 1:24-32. How well does the immorality of the Roman nation — and its Caesars — fit with Rev 18:5?

Rev 18:7-8 about “Babylon” the Roman Empire is very similar to Isaiah 47:7-11 (regarding Babylon of Chaldea) !

Now that we have considered who Babylon represents, let us evaluate **those who weep over her fall** (Rev 18:9-19.) Rev 18:3 introduced the “alliance” of other nations and peoples with her. The world’s nations have joined with Rome to make the most of her wealth and power. The fornication was an “unholy, idolatrous political and economic alliance of kings for business and commercial advantage.” (*Hailey*) They too have sinned in the process of self-gain.

Note that the “**one hour**” in which the destruction is accomplished is the same amount of time the 10 kings reign with the beast (Rev 17:12-14, 18:10.) The time of reigning may appear long to man, but from heaven’s viewpoint is short in comparison to God’s plan!

Three groups of mourners are mentioned. The **kings of the earth** (9-10), **merchants of the earth** (11-17), and **those of the sea** (17-19). At least 29 commodities are mentioned in vss 12 -13 (count them!), but a few are worth mentioning. Silk came from the far east (China), indicating the extent of the trade. Thyine or Citron wood was from North Africa, beautiful and prized for its aroma and fine furniture. The Cinnamon would have been from South China. The “spice” is apparently a spice from India. **These indicate the wealth and extent of trade with Rome.** Note that those mentioned from the sea trade were three groups: **shipmaster**, making their profit; **passengers**, for pleasure or business travel; and **sailors**, for their employment. Compare to Ezek 27:27-36 regarding God’s overthrow of Tyre. (See questions 5 & 6.)

5. What is common about the location where each of these 3 groups stands as they mourn her loss? **Why** is this their location?

6. **Why** does each group mourn and weep? (Are they truly sorry just because a great empire has crumbled?) (Refer also to Ezekiel 27:33-36).

Let us now look at **those who rejoice** (18:20 & 19:1-5.) God’s people rejoice over this Babylon’s downfall. **Why?** *Are they rejoicing because men’s souls are lost? For their own revenge? (SEE QUESTION 7.)* Remember that in chapter 11 the earth dwellers rejoiced over the death of the 2 witnesses; the tables have now been turned.

7. See Rev 18:20, along with 18:5 & 24 - 19:2. Why are they rejoicing?

Compare vs 21 to Jer 51:60-64, where Jeremiah instructed to read the words of Babylon's judgment, and then cause the scroll to sink – just as Babylon would be destroyed, never to be seen again.

Vs 22-23 show us "silence of the city", quiet and motionless like the millstone entombed in the sea. Vs 22 is similar to Isa 24:8 & Ezek 26:13; while vs 23 is like Jer 16:9, Jer 7:34. (SEE QUESTION 8.) **"Those who possessed the mark of the beast would no longer be able to enjoy the lifestyle of the rich and powerful "queen" of the world."** (Harkrider.)

8. Rev 18:22-23 mentions 5 aspects of normal life that would become extinct. What are these? (HINT: The first is Music)

9. In vss 23-24, How would you explain the reasons given for Babylon's judgment?

Look back at an "obvious" command given to God's people in 18:4. Why was this stated? From Rev 2:14 & 2:20-22, the temptation to participate was great, and was even within the church. See also II Cor 6:17.

10. APPLICATION: Consider why the world was saddened by Rome's ("Babylon's") fall. How can WE do the same today, & how can that lead us astray?