

## The Fall of Babylon

### Revelation 18:1-24

#### Introduction

1. Our world has truly become a “global village.” We can travel and talk to the ends of the earth. One requires a few hours, the other only a few minutes. This amazing reality has come about recently and quickly. It brings with it many opportunities, both for good and for evil.
2. George Will, “Now, Weapons of Mass Disruption,” (*Newsweek*, Oct. 29, 2001), 76, writes,
 

*Consider cyberterrorism, assaults that can be undertaken from anywhere on the planet against anything dependent on or directed by flows of information. Call this soft terrorism. Although it can put lives in jeopardy, it can do its silent, stealthy work without tearing flesh or pulverizing structures. It can be a weapon of mass disruption rather than mass destruction. Today’s networked world of complexity and interconnectedness has vast new vulnerabilities with a radius larger than that of any imaginable bomb blast. Terrorists using computers might be able to disrupt information and communications systems and, by doing so, attack banking and financial systems, energy (electricity, oil, gas) and the systems for the physical distribution of America’s economic output.*

George Will rightly notes the terrorist possibilities that seem to multiply almost daily around the world. It has become frightful what man can do to man, and yet, all of this pales in comparison to what God can do, what God will do before Jesus comes again.

3. In Revelation 17 we saw the rise and fall of religious, spiritual Babylon. After using her like a harlot, the kings of the earth discard her as worthless and of no account. However, Babylon, that evil system that stands in opposition to all that is of God and good is multifaceted. She is spiritual and religious. She is also commercial and economic. Like its harlot counterpart, this aspect of Babylon will also exert worldwide influence. Like its harlot counterpart, this aspect of Babylon will be utterly destroyed.
4. This chapter is a requiem, a funeral dirge, a song of lamentation and sorrow over the demise and destruction of Babylon. What is Babylon?
  - 1) A symbol for Antichrist’s whole godless system
  - 2) Rome
  - 3) Jerusalem
  - 4) Rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates River

\*I tentatively hold to #1, though #4 cannot be easily dismissed.

#### **I. God judges Babylon with great retribution. 18:1-8**

*‘Left Behind’ Authors Say Sept. 11 Not Part of Prophecy*  
 (RNS) Oct. 23, 2001. The authors of the popular “Left Behind” series of end-times thrillers believe the Sept. 11 attacks were not predicted in biblical prophecy. But Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins said the events of that day provided an image of what could happen in the period of tribulation they believe will occur after the Rapture, a future time when they think Christians will suddenly ascend to heaven. “We believe the tribulation period actually follows the Rapture ... when Christ returns to rapture the church so that what happened here is a picture of how bad it can be,” Jenkins said in a Tuesday (Oct. 16) teleconference with reporters.

The Tribulation will be a terrible time indeed, and evil Babylon will not escape the horror.

1. **She is judged because of those who live there. 18:1-2**

\* After these things I saw – marks the beginning of a new vision.

\* Another (allon) angel 1) from heaven, 2) having great authority, 3) illumines the earth with His glory. Having come from the very presence of God, the angel reflects and radiates the glory of God. The earth is lit up by the one who comes from God.

\* Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen – stated in the past tense, repeated for emphasis. It is a signed, sealed and settled reality (cf. Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:8).

\* A dwelling place (haven) of demons, and prison ... foul, unclean spirits, a cage ... unclean and hated birds. The proud has been laid low, absolute desolation and desertion is mighty Babylon's end. Once her streets teemed with people, she thrived with activity. Now, only the evil and unclean occupy her vanity fair. Tokyo, London, New York, suddenly nothing more than ghost towns.

2. **She is judged because of those who lay there. 18:3**

\* “All” nations have drunk (intoxicated) of the wine of the maddening (NIV) of her fornication. The world is in an intoxicating stupor consumed and controlled by their lust for stuff.

\* The kings likewise were seduced and entrapped in their desire for more at the exclusion of God.

\* The merchants – the luxury of things, stuff, the wealth of this world becomes the lover all the world pursues. Gold is more important than God. Silver outranks the Savior. Money, money, money captivates rather than the Master. The things of this life overshadow the things of the life to come. “Eat, drink, be merry and make money, for we shall never die!” The world crawls in bed with the whore of wealth, unaware of her infectious and fatal disease.

3. **She is judged because of those who leave there. 18:4-5**

\* Another voice – probably another angel.

\* Come out (aor. imp.) ... my people (God's people) lest you share (fellowship) in her sins ... receive her plagues (judgment).

\* Verse 5 explains verse 4.

\* Her sins have reached (piled up, NIV), accumulated to heaven and God remembers ...

Application:

1) **Romans 12:2** says “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

2) The sins of the lost are remembered not forgotten, but ours ...

**Isaiah 43:25** –“ I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.”

**Jeremiah 31:34** – “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

#### 4. **She is judged because of the luxury there. 18:6-8**

\* Righteous God is asked to judge.

\* Lit. “Double unto her the double” expresses full and complete judgment according to what she has done (v. 6).

**Jeremiah 50:29** – “Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; let none of them escape. Repay her according to her work; according to all she has done, do to her; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel.”

\* Made her drink out of her own cup! Double! (Completely – v. 6).

\* Let her punishment fit the crime (v. 7).

\* Let her arrogant boast be brought to an end! (v. 7)

- I am a winner not a loser.

- I am rich not poor.

- I am full not empty.

- I am self-sufficient. I need no one.

\* One day – quickly, suddenly. It does not take long to bring her down (9-11-01 taught us how quickly the mighty can fall).

\* Death ... fire!!! In the ancient world the smoke of a burning city signaled its collapse. Not much has changed! It is the Lord God’s doing. Nothing can prevent it.

## II. **God judges Babylon with great lamentation. 18:9-20**

Verses 9-20 consist of 3 dirges or laments over the sudden destruction of Babylon: 1) The kings (vs. 9-10), 2) the merchants (vs. 11-17), and 3) all seamen of every trade (vs. 18-20) wail over the fall of their idol, their god. The words of John recall the words of Ezekiel 27 and the sorrow over the destruction of Tyre.

### 1. **Her judgment comes quickly. 18:9-10**

\* The kings weep and lament first (sob openly).

\* This harlot had brought them great wealth and happiness. They are sad to see her go (shown by her burning / smoke).

\* They stand at a distance (vs. 10, 15, 17), afraid of being consumed by the same torment and destruction.

\* Alas, alas (*NIV*, “woe, woe”), Greek *ouai, ouai* (cf. vs. 10, 16, 19).

\* The city “great” and “strong” reduced to ashes by God in “one hour,” swiftly, suddenly.

#### Illustration

Like the twin towers of the World Trade Center, Babylon crashes to the ground more quickly than we could ever imagine. SHOCK is the only word that can describe man’s reaction.

### 2. **Her riches are consumed completely. 18:11-18**

\* Economic collapse and chaos ensue. Tokyo, London, Wall Street bottom out. The Nasdaq, Stock market, and the S&P hit the skids, take a dive.

\* The financial wizards of the world weep and mourn. Commerce and trade come to a screeching halt. The malls are empty, shopping is stifled.

\* Verses 12-13 list 29 items of value and wealth, falling into 6 categories: 1) Precious metals and gems; 2) Fabrics for expensive clothing; 3) Ornaments; 4) Aromatic substances; 5) Foodstuffs and 6) Animals and men. Note at the end of verse 13 “bodies and souls of men.” Once again, mankind will traffic in human slavery, a testimony to the utter depravity of man.

\* The fruit (return of their investment) their soul (*psyche*) lust for gone ... “all” the things gone and literally “no more not no” them shall you find! This is the first of 7 double negatives in the remainder of the chapter. This is actually a double, double negative!

\* These merchants continue to keep their distance (v. 15; cf. v. 10).

\* These merchants continue to weep and wail (cf. v. 11).

\* These merchants again say “alas, alas,” (woe, woe), *ouai, ouai*.

\* In essence they ask, “how could something so great and so rich come to nothing and so quickly (vs. 16-17).

\* A third group joins the mourning for Babylon (v. 17). Like the others they keep their distance. To the others they add their perspective in language reminiscent of the praise of the beast in 13:4, “Who is like the great city?” Who could have imagined she would end like this.

She was glorious and now she is gone.

She was rich and now she is ruined.

She was everything and now she is nothing.

Wealth is great while it lasts, but never forget wealth does not last!

### 3. Her demise is carried out suddenly. 18:19-20

a) On earth there will be weeping. 18:19

\* Dust on the head, weeping, wailing are all ancient Near Eastern signs of grief and mourning (Job 2:12; Lamentations 2:10).

\* 3<sup>rd</sup> time alas, alas (woe, woe), *ouai, ouai*.

\* 3<sup>rd</sup> time one hour she is made desolate, laid waste, brought to ruin.

b) In heaven there will be rejoicing. 18:20

\* Rejoice (be glad) – heaven has a completely different perspective on Babylon’s judgment and destruction. Rejoicing is not over the death of lost souls, but at the justice and righteousness of God in dealing with sin and all that Antichrist and his evil empire have brought upon the earth.

\* God has avenged, not man. It is ultimately His business to settle the score, not ours.

## III. God judges Babylon with great destruction. 18:21-24

It is time to turn out the lights. Party time on evil earth has come to an end. A deafening silence now sweeps across the world as Babylon disappears from the radar screen.

### 1. There will be no record of her. 18:21

\* 6 times in vs. 21-23 the word “anymore,” no more at all occurs. It is the double negative *ou me*.

\* Mighty angel appears (3<sup>rd</sup> time; cf. 5:2; 10:1). This spiritual Hercules, this angelic Atlas in graphic symbolism throws a great milestone into the sea. It plunges to the bottom never

to be seen again. This is Babylon's destiny. She appears never to be seen or heard from again. Suddenly, she is gone forever.

**2. There will be no rejoicing over her. 18:22**

\*Music ceases! Silence reigns! In places where the city and streets were once centers of song and music, now ... only an eerie silence!

**3. There will be no rebuilding of her. 18:22**

\*No one works, industry comes to a standstill.

\*The economy comes to a screeching halt.

**4. There will be no regard for her. 18:23**

\*Darkness drapes the destroyed city as she is abandoned, forsaken. No one visits anymore.

\*No one falls in love or marries anymore.

\*Her judgment is just. By sorcery (*pharmakeia*) all were deceived. Intoxicated and fooled by her religion, wealth and power, the nations "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God" for a lie! The great are brought down. The influential are shown to have played the fool. They gave their life to that which does not last. They thought the ride would never end. They are stunned when time runs out. When the clock counts down to zero they are unprepared. They thought such a day would never come. They were deceived. The magic of money and the attractiveness of Antichrist blinded their eyes, their minds and their hearts. What an awesome witness to the power of sin and the seduction of Satan.

**5. There will be no redemption for her. 18:24**

\*The blood of believers run through her streets.

\*Rejecting and despising the shed blood of Christ for sin, Babylon sheds and demands the blood of those who love and follow the Lamb. For persons like this, there is no salvation, no redemption. Her guilt cries for justice and God hears that cry.

**Conclusion**

Luke 12:16-21, *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years: take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*