

Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18

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Revelation 18:1-8

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. ² And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! ³ For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. ⁷ In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’

⁸ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

v1-2 – What does this other angel do?

He came down to earth from heaven to announce in a mighty and loud voice that Babylon had fallen.

What do we know about this angel?

He has great authority and illuminates the earth. This illumination is probably both literal and figurative.

What is Babylon?

It is the world-wide religious, governmental, and economic system of the Antichrist.

Why is this world-wide authority called Babylon?

It is symbolic... where the collective spirit of making mankind’s own way to heaven first began at the Tower of Babel.

At this point in the Tribulation Jesus hadn’t come back yet and the Antichrist is still on earth so how could it be that the Babylon government had fallen?

All the plagues of the wrath of God are complete, the economy is finished, and so is the Antichrist. All that is left is the reaping of unbelievers that will happen when Jesus returns.

How is it that Babylon had become, “a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird”?

All the fallen angels including Satan were banished from the spiritual realm and were on earth awaiting their judgment when Jesus returns.

v3 – On what had the nations gotten drunk?

the wine of the wrath of her fornication – their collaborative conspiracy to oppose God by persecuting His people

How had the merchants of the earth gotten rich through the abundance of Babylon’s luxury?

They took advantage of the situation and the Antichrist’s governance to enrich themselves.

- The oligarchies of socialist nations come to mind.
- The recent spike in beef prices are a foreshadowing of this... meat packers conspired to fix prices under the cover of the corona virus crisis.

v4-5 – What was the message of the other voice from heaven?

Don’t get caught in the Antichrist’s snare, look past the material world to consider the spiritual and eternal side of things. All who follow the Antichrist will share in the Antichrist’s fate.

Does this mean that people can change their eternal fate at this stage of the Tribulation?

Probably not since the followers of Antichrist would have all taken the Mark of the Beast at this point. This is a call to the followers of Christ to physically separate themselves from the kingdom of the Antichrist so as not to share their fate in the physical world.

How had Babylon's sins reached heaven?

God had not overlooked Babylon's sins and was judging the earth-dwellers for their rejecting God's provision for mankind.

v5-6 – How would Babylon's punishment be greater than the evil they had perpetrated?

What the Antichrist's followers had dished out on followers of Christ would be done to them and indeed their punishment would be worse because it would be eternal... the "second death" of Revelation 20:14.

- *in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her* – She killed mortals who would have eternal life, she'd lose her mortal life and her eternal life

v7-8 – What is the fate of Babylon?

- Her pleasures on earth will be temporary despite her denial
- Her downfall will be swift and complete because it is the Creator God who will see to her punishment.

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall

Revelation 18:9-20

⁹ "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

¹¹ "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

¹² merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

¹³ and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. ¹⁴ The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, ¹⁶ and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷ For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance ¹⁸ and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

¹⁹ "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

²⁰ "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

v9-10 – What happens to Babylon?

It is destroyed by the fiery judgment of God.

Could Babylon be a physical place?

- It could be... prophecy scholars understand the importance to interpret Scripture literally so many believe that Babylon will be resurrected as the capitol of the world by the Antichrist.
- But I believe it is one of the many symbols of Revelation hence the reference to Mystery Babylon.

Why would Babylon be referred to as a mighty city if it is not a place and is only symbolic?

It being referred to as a mighty city is part of the symbolism... the original Babylon where mankind's collective effort in defying God was first seen was as a mighty city. This city has grown to include all the earth-dwellers world-wide. A city is a creation of mankind.

How is it that judgment comes to Babylon in one hour?

The downfall of the world-wide Babylon religious, governmental, and economic systems will happen suddenly with the conclusion of God pouring out His wrath on the earth-dwellers when the bowl judgments are complete (recall the 7th bowl where the earth had such a quake that the islands and mountains disappeared; Revelation 16:17-21).

v11 – How do the merchants react to the destruction of Babylon?

They weep and mourn over her... they realize that they bet on the wrong party. They should have believed the testimony of Jesus Christ rather than going for the limited, short-term of the Antichrist.

v12-13 – What merchandise were the products of Babylon?

Quite the list of mostly luxurious items along with staples such as flour and wheat.

How is it that the "bodies and souls of men" is included here?

- The luxurious items that the economy of the Antichrist must accommodate is slaves.
- The souls of men would be all who took the Mark in order to participate in the Antichrist's economy

- So, this passage may actually be a solution for the Church Age unbeliever who finds himself as a Tribulation saint who would like to survive to the millennial Kingdom but not take the Mark... become a slave.

v14 – What is the fruit that your soul longed for by those lamenting the demise of Babylon?

The utopian society promised by the Antichrist and even before him, the spirit of the Antichrist... humanism that envisions a society without God.

How is it that luxuries the earth dwellers longed for would never be found?

For them the end had come. Such luxuries would only be seen on earth during the Millennial Kingdom if at all. And they would not be entering the Millennial Kingdom. All that awaits the earth dwellers at the end of the Tribulation is physical death followed by a brief time in the Torments compartment of Hades then the Great White Throne Judgment followed by the Lake of Fire.

v15-16 – How will the merchants who traded in the Babylon economy react to its destruction?

They would remain at a distance for fear of getting caught-up in the destruction while weeping and wailing over their misfortune.

v17-19 – What is the significance of Babylon being destroyed in one hour?

It will happen suddenly... how long do earthquakes and hail storms last?

What is the significance of the ship masters and passengers lamenting Babylon's destruction?

- The trade of the Antichrist's economy was world-wide so a lot of it went by sea.
- The sea travelers were relatively unscathed by the earthquakes. Yes, there would be tsunamis but that would only be a problem for ships close to the coast.

Why did the mourners keep referring to the Antichrist's economy as a great city?

Cities are where people come together to work and collaborate. It is where they seek to realize their utopian vision of human society.

Why is it that city dwellers tend in general to be more "progressive" than those who live in rural areas?

Those in rural areas are more aware of the beauty of God and His creation. Those in cities are surrounded by the creations of men and thus it is easier to convince themselves they don't need God.

v20 – Who will rejoice over the destruction of Babylon?

O heaven – the occupants of heaven: the church and holy angels

Why are the holy apostles and prophets called out special for rejoicing?

They had the most persecution and thus most cause for God taking vengeance on the purveyors of the anti-God Babylonian system.

Are these apostles and prophets only during biblical times?

No, God has always had apostles and prophets. The apostles are church starters, the prophets are those who spoke the Word of God.

Why are apostles and prophets most likely to be persecuted?

Spiritual warfare... Satan hates those who are the most visible in being used by God to extend His Kingdom.

Finality of Babylon's Fall

Revelation 18:21-24

²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. ²² The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. ²³ The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

v21 – What is the significance of the mighty angel throwing a stone like a great millstone into the sea?

It adds emphasis to what he is about to say, that the rule of the Babylonian world government was over.

v22-23 – What specific things are mentioned that would no longer be seen in the Kingdom of the Antichrist?

Music, art, construction, manufacturing, electricity, and people getting married. The society of the Antichrist was finished.

How were the merchants the great men of the earth?

- They made it possible for people world-wide to experience the luxuries of the Antichrist economy.
- They were wealthy and powerful by the world's standards.

How were the nations of the world deceived?

The sorcery of the great men. The Greek word here is pharmakeia with these meanings:

- the use or the administering of drugs
- poisoning
- sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it
- the deceptions and seductions of idolatry

It could be that drugs dulled people senses... recall the drug "soma" in "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley. It is also likely that they were a party to the great delusion that God sent on the earth to explain away the supernatural developments of the Tribulation.

v24 – What else was the fruit of the Antichrist's government?

the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth

All the death during the Tribulation was because of the sin of Babylon... thinking collaborative human effort could replace the provision of God.

What is the blessing in recognizing that that the Babylon world system will be destroyed?

The things that are wrong with human government will be replaced with a much better system... a theocratic dictatorship headed by the Lord Jesus Himself.

- Try this out on your liberal friends: tell them that you long for the day when we have a world-wide, theocratic dictatorship on earth (just kidding).

All people agree that the world is broken... we just disagree over how it may be fixed.

- Collaborative human effort (Mystery Babylon) versus trusting in and following Jesus Christ