

## (NKJV) Chapter 18

**The Fall of Babylon the Great**

<sup>1</sup> After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. <sup>2</sup> 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!** <sup>3</sup> 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.**"

<sup>4</sup> 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.** <sup>5</sup> For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.' <sup>8</sup> **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.

**(NKJV) The World Mourns Babylon's Fall**

<sup>9</sup> "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, <sup>10</sup> 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.**'

<sup>11</sup> "And **the merchants of the earth** will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: <sup>12</sup> 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;** <sup>13</sup> 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.** <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, <sup>16</sup> 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! <sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup> and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

<sup>19</sup> "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.**'

(NKJV) <sup>20</sup> "**Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!**"

**Finality of Babylon's Fall**

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> The **sound of harpists**, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. **No craftsman** of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the **sound of a millstone** shall not be heard in you anymore. <sup>23</sup> **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. <sup>24</sup> And **in her was found the blood of prophets and saints**, and of all who were slain on the earth."

**Demon** –(daimon), *supernatural spirit of a bad nature* ("Babylon" is home to them)

**Spirit** –(pneuma) - *rational soul* **Unclean** (ak-ath'-ar-tos) *impure*

**Prison** (foo-lak-ay') - *prison, the act* (imprison or imprisonment)

**Bird** (orneon) -*foul "unclean and being hated"*

**Nations** (ethnos) -*gentile, heathen, nation, people*

**Kings** (bas-il-yooce') -*sovereign, foundation of power*

**Merchant** (emporos) -*tradesman*

**Plagues** (plege) -*calamity, stripe, wound*

## BABYLON IS JUDGED: COMPLETE & SUDDEN

As we have learned from our studies, **Babylon represents civilized community without God**. It has been epitomized by different empires and powers over history and there will be one ultimate example in the end times. It will be global and it will contain the traits we find in this chapter.

Undoubtedly, the Apostle John saw the Roman empire as this “great city”, in the context of the vision. The complete desolation of the city is given in three descriptors:

1. It is the home of demons.
2. It is the prison of impure souls.
3. It is a cage to every unclean and detestable birds.

**For the demons, it is a home** (*katioketerion*), their dwelling place, but to the **impure souls it is a prison**. That word can mean a **place or a state of being** as in, being imprisoned. It is also a prison to unclean birds. Many birds were considered unclean in the Mosaic law, especially birds of prey or those that lived on carrion such as vultures. For that reason, birds are often viewed as harbingers of evil by Jewish tradition. Birds are also known for nesting in abandoned and deserted places. So, **the impression a Jewish Christian like John would get from this imagery would be a place of ultimate evil. It is a repository of the most hideous things from both the spiritual realm and from nature.**

It's important to note two highlights in this chapter, about this great city:

1. Its fall isn't simply the consequences of its sin; it is God's **judgment** on the sin. This is a chapter of accountability.
2. It is a place of great security, until it is not. The **fall of “Babylon” is complete, and sudden**. The suddenness is described in the term “one hour” used three times in the chapter. In fact the speed and completeness of her fall fills her mourners with fear.

## WHAT WAS SO BAD ABOUT BABYLON?

The city was a place of amazing commerce and wealth. A list is given of the goods which came to “Babylon.” It contains an abundance of staples for living as well as every possible luxury item. It contains “the fruit that your soul longed for.”<sup>V14</sup> It was an entrepreneur's dreamland, but was so wrong with that?

Chapter 17 has already painted this same **humanist system as a harlot seducing the world into “fornication.”** The imagery of sexual infidelity has a long-standing tradition for people who should be married to God becoming unfaithful. It is used throughout the Old Testament speaking of Israel, and refers to all God's people through time. The idea is that **she does this through affluence and indulgence**. Babylon denies itself nothing, a habit of self-indulgence erodes character but self-indulgence with no bounds leads to total depravity and decadence. The revelation has already confirmed this in its letters to the churches at the beginning of the vision.

## WHO MOURNS FOR BABYLON AND WHY?

There are three groups of people who mourn the loss of this “great city”:

1. The kings of the earth.
2. The merchants of the earth.
3. The shipmasters, travelers, and sailors of the sea.

The word for king relates to a nation's foundation of power; the government and all that entails. The word for merchant refers to those of skilled trades, and those on the sea relate to those who travel everywhere. They are the lifeblood of global commerce.

In each case, the response is to stand at a distance. These groups don't want to be associated because of the destruction and torment. ***There will undoubtedly be some element of human society that will be the living epitome of this global system, but it is not this particular group, but the practice, nature, and principles*** of a godless human social system that will evoke God's judgment.

***If we were to use examples of the past.*** The civilized world lived under the Roman system, but not all were Roman citizens. In Nazi occupied Europe, there were many who collaborated with Germany, but not all were German citizens. There were even Nazi sympathizers in the nations that went to war with her. Such people were not citizens, but had bought into the system.

The ***kings of the earth commit to this godless system and gain luxury***. The ***merchants and skilled tradesmen buy into the system and enjoy a marketplace*** for their products and services. Those ***who cross seas for commerce embraced the system and became rich***.

Commentators point out that ***the mourning of these groups wasn't for her, but for what they themselves had lost***. There is no love-loss for "Babylon", just for what she could do for them. The godless system is built on a mentality of selfishness, greed, and decadence. There can be no real love in such a mentality.

***Babylon, for all her ugly under-currents, was stunningly beautiful*** and seemingly refined. It embraced the arts and supported every craft. It hosted the finest musicians of every kind. It was beguiling. Its "pharmakeia" misled the earth. In the Greek that word means magic, sorcery, or witchcraft. But it also means medication.

The use of "***pharmakeia***" may be a striking contrast to the city of God in chapter 22 of Revelation. The tree of life has leaves that are a "***therapeia***" for the nations. That word means a medicine or cure. Babylon offers a false healing as compared to God's true healing. In the vernacular, it might be like comparing heroine to penicillin. Both make the pain go away, but only one truly heals, the other eventually destroys, even though it feels better at first.

## THE REASON FOR JUDGMENT: WHAT THIS SYSTEM HAS DONE

The chapter ends in the same way it begins, pointing out that this destruction is not simply natural consequence, or some obscure act of "karma." It is the executed judgment of God for specific reasons, dictated by a perfect justice. It could be categorized in three areas:

1. Babylon's decadence.
2. The misleading of nations.
3. The blood of the "prophets" and "holy ones."

***The last indictment is a particular challenge for those who would be among God's people.*** Neither term used reflects a casual believer. "***Prophet***" (prof-ay'-tace) means a *foreteller or inspired speaker*. "***Holy one***" (hagios) means *the sacred, pure, morally blameless, holy, or a saint*.

This morning we spoke of the ***true basis of Christianity***, it is ***transformation***, where we are not simply saved FROM sin, but ***TRANSFORMED TO*** a "new self"; we are ***CONSECRATED***, or repurposed to a holy use.

It is impossible to over-empathize this basic fact: **Throughout this revelation, God does not recognize any other type of believer. If anything, the casual believer is chastised and warned.**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- In what ways do we see illustrations of self-indulgence in our social system similar to Babylon?
- What elements of a global social system do we see taking root today?
- Is that technology necessarily evil? -Then when and how would it be deemed "godless"?
- Among other things, "Babylon" trades in the bodies and souls of men; how may that apply in our modern system of society?
- Why does the chapter emphasize the fall of "Babylon" in one hour?
- Why does the chapter emphasize the finality of "Babylon's" fall?
- How do God's people "come out" of Babylon?