**The Pronouncement of God's Curse on Babylon**

***Revelation 18:1-24***

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Introduction: A "Black Friday" in 1929? Stock market crash beginning the Great Depression. Consider the market's downturn, particularly since 9/11. All are simply a foreshadowing of a future day; not just a dip in the market, or even a depression in the country, but the destruction of world markets. How & why? Think about what could have been a result if not for the victory of the Allies in the Gulf War. What if Saddam gained control of 63% of the world's oil fields? Would he have been able to control all the world's economies? Now consider Revelation 18, the destruction of commercial Babylon. Note with me this morning the message of Babylon's doom & the mourning for Babylon's doom. Then tonight we will consider the measure of Babylon's doom.

I. The message of Babylon's doom (:1-8)

A. The indictment (:1-3) [& cf. 16:19]

1. Commercial Babylon is demonic (:2) > "This abandonment of destroyed Babylon to demons

is a divine judgment stemming from the utter wickedness of its inhabitants described in verse

three" (Walvoord).

2. Commercial Babylon is drunken (:3) > Babylon is intoxicating, "...commercial Babylon

seduces the unbelieving world into a materialistic stupor, so that the people of the world will

become drunk with passion because of their relationship with Babylon."

3. Commercial Babylon is defiled (:3) > The political leaders have abandoned God for the

wealth & luxuries this world has to offer.

Summary: "Her pleasures, her riches, her show of religion were all intoxicating wines that dulled

the sensibilities of the nations & led them to follow her religion of idolatry in order to gain the

same abundant life she seemed to have" (Wisdom).

B. The invitation (:4)

1. Who? Believers living in the tribulation, particularly those in Babylon (cf. 14:6-12). Why

were they in Babylon? Was it the temptation to compromise? "One of the saddest com-

mentaries on the Christian witness through the ages has been its perennial dilution through

compromise with the world system of evolutionary humanism. The wistful desire of Christ-

ian intellectuals, of Christian entertainers, of Christian business & professional people, even

of Christian ministers, for recognition & approval by their colleagues in 'Babylon' has been

the downfall of innumerable Christian individuals & institutions over the years. God has

repeatedly had to deal with this problem of compromise" (H. Morris).

2. What? "Come out of her, My people..." - cf. Jer. 51:6 & 45 (50:4-8) & II Cor. 6:14-17

3. Why? Believers are to separate from her in order not to partake of her sins & not to receive

of here plagues (judgment)

C. The instruction (:5-8) [3 laws of God - reasons for separation from Babylon]

1. Law of remembrance (:5)

a. Sins "reached unto heaven" - glued, or welded together, or piled

b. As bricks of ancient time were "piled" high in building the tower of Babel ["...but the only

thing that reached heaven was the stench of their rebellion" (Morris)]

2. Law of retribution (:6)

a. "Reward" - 'to pay a debt' or 'to give back that which is due' ["lex telionis"]

b. "...retributive judgment is doubled in severity because of the enormity of her sins" (Ryrie).

3. Law of retaliation (:7-8)

a. Instead of glory & luxury, God retaliates with torment & sorrow; though she claimed to be

a queen, she was in reality a widow because she forsook the Lord.

b. Her retaliation occurs in one day - cf. Dan. 5:1, 3-5, 30 - ancient Babylon's fall

II. The mourning for Babylon's doom (:9-19)

A. Lamentation by the "mighty" ones (:9-10) ["kings of the earth" cf. Psalm 2:2-3]

1. The lamenters - "kings of the earth"

a. Their identity - political leaders (view destruction "afar off" - T.V.??)

b. Their iniquity - "...they had lived in intimate fellowship with the idolatrous philosophy of

the world & they had by means of this total dedication to the world's philosophy, lived

in insolent & defiant luxury" (Wisdom).

2. The location - "Babylon"

a. Literally, "the city the great, Babylon the city the mighty" - emphasizing the greatness

of the extent of its power & accomplishments.

b. The ancient city of Babylon rebuilt? See Isa. 13:6, 9-11. 19-22; Jer. 51:24-26, 61-64.

There is a future destruction of Babylon coming in the day of the Lord.

3. The lamentation - "Alas, alas..."

a. "Lament" - a beating the breast in anguish; "bewail" - uncontrollable sobbing; "alas" -

"ouai" - same word translated "woe" in 8:13.

b. The word ("alas") '...is mournful in both its sound & meaning & is reminiscent of the

hopeless wailing of those who mourn the passing of loved ones" (Walvoord).

B. Lamentation by the merchants (:11-17a)

1. Who? (:11) > "kings" of banking, shipping, construction; wholesalers in international com-

merce; called "great men of the earth" in vs. 23.

2. Why? (:11) > "no man buyeth their merchandise any more"

a. The loss of their merchandise - mourning & sorrow for their financial losses, not for the

city's destruction or the loss of human lives.

b. The list of their merchandise (:12-14) - [28 categories, 14 each in vss. 12 & 13; Four

"sevens" (the number of completeness) & "four" (the number of the earth, N,S,E,W) -

therefore speaks of all the world's wealth; a representative, not comprehensive list]

(1) Four items of timeless value, precious metals & jewels

(2) Four kinds of valuable cloth

(3) Six kinds of valuable building material

(4) Four luxury items, spices & perfumes

(5) Four important international commodities ("oil" - petroleum??)

(6) Four livestock items ("chariot" > 4-wheeled wagon, not a war chariot)

(7) Two references to the slave trade ("white-slave trade"?? - international traffic in

forced prostitution)

Summary: "The combined picture is one of complete abandonment to the wealth of this

world & total disregard of God who gave it" (Walvoord).

3. What? (:15-17a)

a. "Weeping & wailing" - cf. Matthew 16:26 & James 5:1, 5-6.

b. "Alas, alas..." - "ouai" ("woe") - "Yet, with all their agony & mourning, there is not a

single note of repentance or of sorrow for sin, or even of acknowledgment that Babylon's

destruction is a divine judgment. There is no regret for the bodies & souls of the multi-

tudes of men whom they had abused in their insatiable worship of wealth & power" (Mor.)

C. Lamentation by the mariners (:17b-19)

1. Their cry: "Alas, alas..." (the third use of this lament)

a. By those "...who have their employment in shipping-related industries, since Babylon is the

central focus of all trade & the repository of global wealth" (Morris).

b. Yet not for the city or its inhabitants, but for the loss of their wealth.

2. Their contrast:

a. Matthew 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth..."

b. "In contrast to the transitory wealth & glory of this world, which are here consumed by a

great judgment from God, are the true riches of faith, devotion, & service for God laid up

in heaven beyond the destructive hands of man & protected by the righteous power of

God" (Walvoord).

Summary: "...this mournful elegy expresses perhaps better than anything in all literature the

hopeless lament of souls who know they are lost & doomed but are unable even to acknow-

ledge or care about the sin of unrepenting unbelief which put them there. Their only thought is

one of lost wealth & power" (Morris). See Psalm 52:7.

Conclusion: How about you this morning? Where is your hope & trust? Consider the sobering words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, & lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). There is much talk & concern these days for the "Stock Market Exchange." But the greatest exchange ever was the day Christ died in our place upon the cross of Calvary, giving His life a ransom for many. Have you experienced that "exchange"? Do you know first-hand of Paul's words in II Corinthians 5:21, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"?

Closing illustration: Aldous Huxley, British agnostic, author of Brave New World.

*Revelation 18:1-24* (Part II)

III. The measure of Babylon's doom (:20-24)

A. An exhortation to rejoice (:20) - [Exultation contrasted with the previous lamentation]

1. Who?

a. "Thou heaven" - all the saints & angels assembled in heaven

b. "Holy apostles & prophets" - those who had a divinely commissioned responsibility

on earth, most of whom suffered persecution & some were martyred

2. Why?

a. "For God hath avenged you on her" - literally, "God hath judged your judgment

on them"

b. In partial answer to the martyrs' plea (6:9-11); God now slays those who slew the saints;

see Romans 12:19 & Deuteronomy 32:35).

B. An exemplification (or illustration) to remember (:21-23a)

1. A previous prophecy > Jeremiah 51:61-64 & cf. Matthew 18:6

2. A prophetic picture > Babylon's future, complete destruction; like a stone thrown into the

ocean & is lost forever.

3. A poignant pronouncement > (:22-23a)

a. "No more at all" - a double negative used 7 times; Babylon's ultimate end

b. "The voice" - "phone" - "sound" -- "The very silence of the city is a testimony to

God's devastating judgment" (Walvoord).

C. An explanation to realize (:23b-24)

1. Babylon deceived the nations

a. Spiritual seduction > the false religion of satanic evolutionary humanism

b. Physical seduction > "sorceries" - "pharmakeia" - our "pharmacy & pharmaceuticals"

reference to hallucinatory drugs??

2. Babylon destroyed the saints

a. Those she could not deceive, she tried to destroy (in times past up through the Great

Tribulation)

b. Since the days of Nimrod up to today (i.e. Islam, Communism, etc.) - ["It is estimated

that more than one hundred million people have died in communist purges. This mon-

strous fruit of the bitter root of evolutionary atheism has, of course, destroyed multitudes

of people who were not Christians at all, but it is God's true witnesses who have been the

objects of its special hatred" (Morris).

Conclusion: I quote John Walvoord at length: "There is an obvious parallel in the rise & fall of Babylon in its varied forms in Scripture. As introduced in Genesis 11:1-9, Babylon, historically symbolized by the tower reaching to heaven, proposed to maintain the union of the world through a common worship & a common tongue. God defeated this purpose by confusing the language & scattering the people. Baby-lon, ecclesiastically symbolized by the woman in Revelation 17, proposes a common worship & a com-mon religion through uniting in a world church. This is destroyed by the beast in Revelation 17:16 who thus fulfills the will of God (17:17). Babylon, politically symbolized by the great city of Revelation 18, attempts to achieve its domination of the world by a world common market & a world government. These are destroyed by Christ at His second coming (Rev. 19:11-21). The triumph of God is therefore witnessed historically in the scattering of the people & the unfinished tower of Genesis 11 & prophetically in the destruction of the world church by the killing of the harlot of Revelation 17 & in the destruction of the city of Revelation 18. With the graphic description of the fall of Babylon contained in chapters 17 & 18, the way is cleared for the presentation of the major theme of the book of Revelation, the second coming of Christ & the establishment of His glorious kingdom."

Why is all of this being revealed to us here in the Book of Revelation? I believe we are given this as both an explanation & an exhortation. As we examine this book, we cannot help but see that God is sovereign over all & that Jesus Christ is indeed the King of kings & Lord of lords. We join the cry of Abraham of old, who cried out concerning the possible destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). The exhortation is for us to submit our lives to Him now as our Lord & Savior & to share the truth of His Word with others. That starts with us training our children to know, love, & serve the Savior by submitting to His will for their lives. That also includes the warning given in this chapter as well as in II Corinthians 6:17, "Come out from among them, & be ye separate saith the Lord..." Are you separated from the world & unto God? Are you surrendered to do His will, actively participating in His work?