

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Judgment of Babylon”

Revelation 18:9-24

Introduction

1. The total destruction of the commercial system of the rebuilt city of Babylon is recorded. This system has associations with the Beast (Rev. 13:1-10) who holds the end time military power. Along with these two players during the Tribulation Period, is the religious system, the Great Harlot.
2. It is clear that the harlot is a mystery (17:5), is supported by the Beast and his alliance (17:9), and later is hated and burned by the Beast (17:16), the military power.
3. The opening verses of this chapter (18:1-8) set forth the plan of judgment for commercial Babylon. There is no question that plagues will come to Babylon because the Lord is strong Who judges (18:8).
4. That God will intervene in the Middle East during this period is prophesied by Zechariah (5:5-11). It is anticipated that pressure will build in that region until the climactic events described here (18:9-24).

5. Be it noted that earth will lament and heaven will rejoice over the demise of commercial Babylon. Study the account:

1. LAMENTATION vv. 9-19

a. By Governmental Leaders vv. 9, 10

Here are the kings of the earth. Their sorrow over Babylon is indicated by two verbs: bewail (weep loudly) and lament (beat the breast). The city goes up in smoke and burning. This is a most horrible plague. So horrendous is the scene that the kings take their stand afar off and watch. Their inability to withdraw from the scene is noted by the vivid perfect tense verb (stand). Furthermore, on account of the fear of the city's torment, the kings utter “woe woe” that Babylon the mighty city is judged!

b. By Commercial Interests vv. 11 - 19

1) Merchants vv. 11 - 17a

a) What they did v. 10

These merchants of the earth (same as kings of the earth) also bewail (weep loudly) and lament (mourn). Both verbs are present tenses. Why? There is no consumer confidence!

b) What they had vv. 11-13

The word “merchandise” (cargo, what fills a ship, Acts 21:3) includes all that has been the luxuries offered by Babylon. Nearly 30 kinds of merchandise are enumerated. Among these are fine stones, linens, silks, ornamental African wood and vessels, fragrant spices, cooking ingredients, a variety of animals and wagons. In addition to all of this, there were bodies (slaves) and the souls of men. This is no mean list of items which did not sell (v. 11).

c) What they lost vv. 14, 15

Twice the verb “departed” (aorist tense) is used to connote the passing away of what was (1) desirable (2) dainty and (3) splendid (v. 14). What has been wealth is all

gone and this causes weeping, wailing, and wonder (v. 15).

d) What they said vv. 16, 17a

The words of woe (2 x) are expressed that the great city which was clothed (perfect tense) in finery, is suddenly laid desolate (cf. 17:16; 18:19).

2) Transporters vv. 17b - 19

Two dirges have been studied -- about kings and merchants. Now comes the third -- those in shipping. Every one involved -- captains, sailors, support people, everyone in transportation services, they all stand afar off and cry (imperfect tense). They see the smoke and burning city. Exasperated at what is taking place, these throw dust on their heads, keep on crying (imperfect tense) and continue to weep and lament (present tense). What made them rich is suddenly gone!

Note: The Bible predicts an economic catastrophe after the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation.

2. EXULTATION vv. 20 - 24.

a. About vengeance v. 20

The present middle imperative commands rejoicing (exultation) by heaven, holy apostles, and prophets. This represents all related beings in fellowship with the Lord and signifies their victory. Reason for rejoicing? Because so (grammar) God has judged (aorist tense) your judgment on Babylon.

b. About violence vv. 21-23

The modernists, postmillennialists, those who deny the pretribulationism of the Bible all find it hard to view these verses. As the present becomes increasingly more difficult, it is predicted that Christ's kingdom will come to earth cataclysmically (Dan. 2:44, 45). Absolutely, in no other way. Here it is described as effected by a millstone (v. 21), the kind turned by an animal, not a woman. A mighty angel wields the stone and casts it into the sea. It is with a violent and hostile assault. The action is taken so that Babylon is thrown down (aorist passive) and is never (double negative) found again. The effective results of this for the city of Babylon is catastrophic. Mirth stops, all business stops, lights go out, marriages cease, industry comes to an end. All these activities were the efforts of merchants who were great men of the earth (cf. vv. 9, 11). But all the nations were deceived by the sorcery, chicanery, and charlatanry of Babylon!

c. About vindication v. 24

God has now vindicated his cause and overthrown Babylon. Inasmuch as the city had slain prophets, saints, and others, the Lord's just judgment has been dealt to those who have rejected His message and messengers.

Conclusion The seventh vial (bowl) affirms that Babylon will fall (16:19). The full impact of the prediction has come. The O.T. prophecies concerning Babylon's final overthrow are now fulfilled (Isa. 13, 14; Jer. 50, 51). The Word of God is true and faithful. Believe it and Him!