

REVELATION – SERMON 69

BABYLON IS FALLEN

Revelation 18:1-8

INTRODUCTION

- If man were to vanish from the earth, in a short time the grand accomplishments and monuments that define man's greatness, would turn to nothing.
- Few people really consider that all the precious things of this world will in time pass away to oblivion
- "Heaven is but a fable to some, and things here are counted the only things substantial" (Bunyan)
- In Daniel 2, the world empires are depicted as a glorious image made of various metals
- But the vision records that those kingdoms were finally "broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them" (Daniel 2:34-35)
- The "stone" that will destroy them and that will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth, is Jesus Christ and his millennial kingdom
- The overarching theme of the book of Revelation is the glory and dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ
- Babylon is mentioned 262 times in the Bible, more than any city other than Jerusalem

- As seen previously, the term “Babylon” broadly describes the trans-historical world system under the power of Satan
- It is easily observed in the godless governments, laws, cultures, arts and behaviour of this world
- Having described the character and doom of *ecclesiastical* Babylon in the previous chapter, now we are presented with *economic* Babylon and her ultimate destruction

I. THE IDENTITY OF BABYLON (1-2)

A. The opening verse indicates a separate vision to the previous chapter

1. “After these things” (cf. 4:1; 7:1,9; 15:5; 19:1; 20:3) is frequently used to denote a new vision
2. “Another angel” (18:1) descends to earth to herald the fall of Babylon
 - a. The angels, by virtue of their dwelling in the presence of God (Matthew 18:10), bear his glorious light (Luke 2:9; Acts 12:7)
 - b. His light will be the more dazzling, as the earth is plunged into a tormenting darkness at the pouring of the fifth vial (16:10)

B. Distinguishing the two Babylons of Revelation

1. They share many commonalities
 - a. The same name – Babylon the great (17:5; 18:2)
 - b. The same Satanic power

- c. They both are allied with the beast
- d. They both sit as blaspheming queens (17:4,18; 18:7)
- e. They hate the saints and shed their blood (17:6; 18:24)
- f. They both fornicate with the kings of the earth (17:2; 18:3)
- g. They are both hated by God and are judged by him (17:17; 18:8)

C. There are numerous contrasts between them

BABYLON OF CHAPTER 17	BABYLON OF CHAPTER 18
"Mystery" denoting religion (17:5)	"Merchants/Merchandise" denoting commerce (18:3,11,12,15,23)
Destroyed at the mid-point of tribulation	Destroyed at the seventh seal
Destroyed by kings of the earth (17:16)	Destroyed directly by God (18:5,8,20)
Kings rejoice at her destruction (17:16)	Kings weep at her destruction (18:9-15)
Replaced by the worship of the beast	Replaced by the worship of Christ

1. Outside of chs.17 & 18, Babylon is mentioned in 14:8 and 16:9, and these each predict the downfall of the two forms of Babylon
 - a. The fall of *religious* Babylon is earlier declared in 14:8 before the pouring of the vials
 - b. The fall of *economic* Babylon is earlier declared in 16:9 at the pouring of the seventh vial
2. While there is one Babylonian system, it is manifest in two forms, religious and commercial

3. During the first 3½ years of the tribulation, both will operate and exercise global dominion under the beast, but for the last half, only commercial Babylon will continue, the beast having destroyed religious Babylon in order to bring all worship unto himself

D. Babylon is a city

1. Five times in this chapter Babylon is called a “great city” (vv.10,16,18-19,21); and once the “mighty city” (v.10)
2. Many identify this city as a future rebuilt Babylon in Mesopotamia
 - a. The prophecies concerning Babylon’s complete destruction could be seen as not having been fulfilled
 - b. Revelation 18 appears to draw largely from the Old Testament prophecies concerning the city of Babylon (eg. Jeremiah 51)
3. The alternative view is to understand Babylon in its spiritual sense, as in chapter 17
 - a. The prophecies of Babylon’s destruction and desolation (Isaiah 13:19-22) were fulfilled by Persia in 539 BC
 - b. Attempts to rebuild Babylon have failed
 - c. Daniel, the companion book to Revelation, gives no indication of a future Babylon-based kingdom

- d. Rather, he shows that the final world kingdom under the beast will be based at Rome (Daniel 9:26)
 - e. Rome is the fourth beast of Daniel 7, upon which Babylon sits
 - f. The Babylon of chapter 17 was clearly identified as Rome (17:18)
4. Hence Babylon can be understood to be the final world political/economic system under the control of the beast, which will be destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ

II. THE INIQUITIES OF BABYLON (3,5,7)

A. Corruption of the world with idolatry (3)

- 1. Note v.3 is very similar to 17:2
- 2. The whole world, including the kings of the world, have been led into fornication by her
- 3. At the root is a philosophy of life that utterly rejects God, and that lives only for pleasure and gain
- 4. This is idolatry, the violation of the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:3-6)
- 5. Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has successfully enticed man, being led of their own lusts (James 1:14), to “change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:21-25)

B. Pride (7)

1. “How much she hath glorified herself”
2. Pride is one of the most hateful and abominable sins before God (Proverbs 6:16-19), as it is at the heart of many other sins
3. It was by pride that Lucifer fell (Isaiah 14:13-14)
4. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” (James 4:6)

C. Love of wealth and luxury (7)

1. The great powers in this world are those who have the wealth – banks, corporations, etc
2. The first priority of governments is money – “It’s the economy, stupid”
3. The Almighty Dollar is the god worshipped by multitudes today
4. Babylon has a very close connection to something the Lord Jesus called *mammon* (Matthew 6:24)
 - a. It is a personification of the evil of materialism, transformed into a god before whom the world bows
 - b. Babylon, with its avarice and greed, describes a world given over to the spirit of mammon
5. “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10)

E. “Her sins have reached unto heaven” (5)

1. Though they failed to build a tower unto heaven (Genesis 11:4), they will multiply sins until they reach unto heaven, provoking God's wrath

III. GOD'S INDIGNATION AGAINST BABYLON (2,5,6,8)

A. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen

1. The word order in the Greek is: "It is fallen, it is fallen, Babylon the great"
2. The repetition of "fallen" emphasises the certainty and suddenness of this event (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:8)
3. As in 14:8, this is a proleptic announcement, declaring a future action as having already occurred

B. Babylon's desolation

1. The description in v.2 draws heavily from Old Testament figurative language for desolation (Isaiah 13:21; 34:11,14; 47:7-9; Jeremiah 50-51; Ezekiel 26-28; Nahum 3; Zephaniah 2:15), describing Babylon's state after God judges her
2. God will utterly burn her with fire (v.8), and with violence throw her down (v.21)

C. Babylon's plagues

1. "Her plagues (v.4,8) are the seven vials recorded in chapter 16

2. Though the plagues will be global, the focal point of God's wrath will be upon the beast's seat of power in Rome
 3. Torment, sorrow (v.7), death, mourning, and famine (v.8)
 4. God judges sinners according to their works, and will recompense their way upon their own heads
- D. This is the direct judgment of God – “for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her”
1. Though she appears strong and indestructible, God is Almighty and she will not escape his judgment

CONCLUSION

1. The richest man in the world will still leave all of his wealth behind when he dies (Job 1:21)
2. The sins of Babylon lurk in each of our hearts – idolatry, pride, covetousness – and must be mortified by the grace of God
3. The Christian's treasure is not laid up in this world, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)
4. Every person must make the choice: “Will I serve God, or mammon?” (Matthew 6:24)