

## Lesson # 58 Mourning Over The Fall of Babylon - Revelation 18:9-20

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**Revelation 18: 9-20 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup>And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. <sup>10</sup>They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." <sup>11</sup>And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, <sup>12</sup>cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, <sup>13</sup>cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

<sup>14</sup>"The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!" <sup>15</sup>The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, <sup>16</sup>"Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

<sup>17</sup>For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off <sup>18</sup>and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" <sup>19</sup>And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!"

For in a single hour she has been laid waste. <sup>20</sup>Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

## I. Kings &amp; Merchants Weep vv. 9-13

It is amazing that through the course of Revelation thus far, how impenitent the people of earth are. Their sin hardened hearts have refused to repent and to cry out to God for mercy, choosing instead to cry out to the rocks and hills to fall on them and hide them from God's wrath ( 6:15-17 ); to curse God because of the plagues ( 16:21 ); rejoice over the death of God's 2 witnesses ( 11:10 ); & refuse to repent of their wicked deeds ( 9:20-21 ). Nothing that God has sent in these judgments has triggered the correct response of repentance in the bulk of humanity.

Now, something finally brings those tears of devastation to their eyes as they mourn & weep, but it is not a godly response or repentance, but rather the weeping of those whose idols have been shattered. Along with the destruction of Babylon, the capital city of the Beast, has come the demise of a lucrative trade setup. Part of the lure of Antichrist will be his ability to solve the world's problems – peace, religious conflict, political uprisings and economics. Those who agree to take the Mark and worship him will see that decision payoff for awhile.

Many will be able to make a good living despite the turmoil caused by God's judgments.

The first group John mentions is "the kings of the earth". These are no doubt the leaders of the countries involved, which would include the ten who rule the whole kingdom on behalf of Antichrist ( 17:10 ) along with sub-leaders who report to them. Destruction of the seat of empire can only mean the ultimate destruction of the whole system will soon follow. People may be deluded that these judgments from God are going to stop and He'll give up or be defeated, but now, that must seem impossible. Imagine having placed your trust, your livelihood and authority along with your eternity on the wrong leader in a global war and you know you are on the verge of losing the war. In WW II, once Hitler realized that the Allies were days or maybe hours away from Berlin and his impending capture, and that his dreams of world domination were doomed to failure, he and his wife committed suicide, along with many of his closest aides. He had the stomach for every sort of evil except failure & defeat!

Since the whole world is not destroyed, vv. 9-10 refers to an actual city, and these kings will see the smoke of her burning – literal destruction. These kings are said to have committed sexual immorality with her so the concept of this city as a harlot is again mentioned, but this is likely a euphemism for 'spiritual adultery' or idolatry. The sight of the smoke causes them to weep and wail – strong sentiments. This hurts and I believe they realize the implications of this for their dreams of final victory & that their defeat at God's hands is imminent.

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They stand "far off" because they do not want to share in her fate, so the judgment is now localized but according to v. 10b, it is a complete and very quick destruction, "in a single hour" it has come. If TV's, computers, I-Pads, etc. are still extant, they may be able to see all this on video. Apparently, up to this point, the city has remained relatively unscathed by the judgments and may have seemed impervious, but now that illusion has been shattered as well.

The second group depicted is the merchants who also weep and mourn because their way of life is now gone. No one is going to buy their products anymore and doom seems inevitable. Even at this late date in the Tribulation, with all that has gone on, it is still all about the money for people. As long as they can afford to buy what they want and put food on the table and avoid being killed in the judgments falling on earth, or by the state, what else matters?

John then lists 28 items of categories of wares that these merchants now would not be able to sell. This list is of items commonly traded in ancient times ( cf. **Ezek. 27:12-24** ) and represents a broad spectrum of goods that apparently were in great demand in Babylon and were likely distributed through there and then throughout the world so that Antichrist could get 'his cut'. That is now ended. There are no specifically modern products on the list ( although many of these items are traded in modern times, they are not major trade items ), and chariots are no longer built, but could John be referring to cars?

It is telling to see “slaves, that is human souls” listed as part of the cargoes. We realize today that there is a clandestine slave trade operating in the world, but it is not open, but completely criminal & heinously evil. It’s being represented here means that by this time, it is no longer criminal, but probably consists of an alternative to death for those who refuse to take the Mark. This would resemble but be much worse than what is now known as a “dhimmi” system in Muslim territories. Some of these slaves are likely believers who had some commercial value to those who had captured them on behalf of the Beast – perhaps physical strength, I.T. or weapons skills or great beauty. Just as in Nazi Germany, captured Jews were separated into those who were strong enough to work or beautiful enough to service the troops were spared from death for awhile until their usefulness was of less value than the pleasure of exterminating them.

## II. Commerce is Decimated vv. 14-19

These next 5 verses expose the loss and heartfelt grief of the merchants whose lives have changed completely over the course of an hour. That which their souls longed for ( wealth and prestige ) is gone and they know it. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ story about the man whose farming had brought great wealth and satisfaction, but whose soul was about to be required of him – cf. [Luke 12:13-21](#).

God has just guaranteed the bankruptcy of the entire godless world system, and the end is just over the horizon. Just as the kings did, the merchants stand far off, weeping and mourning because this great city is reduced to smoking rubble ③ in a very short period of time, and v. 17 again mentions, “in one hour”!

Those whose trade involves seagoing – international trade ( & today, most international trade is by sea ) – are singled out for special attention, because of the massive blow this destruction is to that sector of trade in particular. Great ships are expensive to build, buy and run, and the cargoes are the only way to pay for them. If no one buys the cargo, or it cannot be delivered and distributed, they cannot afford to be in business. They too now stand far off and weep. They cry out “What city was like this city?” Recall that ocean going vessels took a substantial ‘hit’ during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet judgment ( Rev. 8:9 ) when 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the ships were destroyed, and certainly, when the sea becomes blood in 16:3, ocean commerce will suffer.

As mentioned in our last lesson, this verse and this question cause some people to try to wiggle the USA into end times prophecy, and they see this as New York City. The smoke of the WTC destruction televised on September 11, 2001 is a good portrait of what the smoke of Babylon will look like, but this is not referring to NYC! Certainly, NYC in today’s economy holds a key position ( within Capitalism anyway ) over the world’s economic health or illness, but the Bible gives no indication that the focus has shifted from the Middle East to a continent unknown to the writers of the Bible during this vision. This is not Rome either, but Babylon, Iraq, for all the reasons previously stated in earlier lessons.

Again, in v. 19, we are told about this quick destruction and John also points out the “great wealth” the ship owners and operators had acquired from their lucrative relationship with the Antichrists kingdom – now all gone.

### III. Rejoicing in Heaven

### v. 20

While the wicked weep and mourn for this city as it goes up in smoke, those in heaven are enjoined to be overjoyed to see God’s judgment on this evil city. Those rejoicing are listed as heaven ( in general ), saints, apostles and prophets.

Note the end of v. 20 – “God has given judgment for you against her”. Way back in Rev. 6:9-10, the martyred saints under the altar in the heavenly temple cried out, “How long?”, wanting to see God’s vengeance on the wicked right away, but God’s reply in v. 11 encouraged them to rest awhile longer until the rest of those destined for martyrdom were killed – then vengeance would come in God’s timing. Vengeance ( God’s domain and responsibility – cf. Romans 12: 19-21 ) was delayed until the timing was right. Now, that time has finally arrived and not only is God vindicated by this judgment, but it is also apparently done on behalf of the saints in heaven. While wicked men weep on earth because destruction has come upon them, there is great rejoicing in heaven.