

## Lesson # 59 The Finality of Babylon's Judgment - Revelation 18: 21- 24

Date: July 29, 2012

**Revelation 18: 21-24 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup>Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; <sup>22</sup>and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, <sup>23</sup>and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. <sup>24</sup>And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."

## I. The Great Millstone vv. 21-23a

Now another mighty angel takes a stone like a giant millstone and throws it into the sea. A typical millstone was 4 – 5 feet in diameter and about 1” thick. It was extremely heavy and was used to grind all sorts of grains. This great millstone is probably much larger than the typical one and is used here as a symbol of what is happening to Babylon. It will disappear just as this stone disappears when the angel throws it into the sea. This is explained in v. 21b by the use of the word “so” – ie. ) ‘in the same way’.

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The verse says that Babylon will be thrown down with violence and the smoke of her burning, just described in 18:8,17,18 & 19. Jeremiah predicts a similar result in ancient Babylon – cf. **Jer. 51:61-64**.

To demonstrate just how barren Babylon will become, John now lists the things that will no longer be found in her ( vv. 22-23 ). No more will music emanate from her; no craftsman will ever work there; no milling will take place ( grain & food processing ); no lamps will be lit and no marriages will take place. It will no longer be a place of joy but of darkness and sadness.

This list is meant to convey the idea that this city which represents the evil empire of the Beast will be so totally decimated that all normal human activity will cease and it will become a wasteland. This great city which began as an ill conceived tower to reach to heaven in Genesis 11, will finally meet her doom at the hands of God who originally spread her inhabitants around the world when He invented different languages.

## II. Judgment Earned vv. 23b-24

There are 3 reasons given here as to why Babylon had to be judged. They are:

1. ) Her merchants were the great ones of the earth – v. 23b;

They used their wealth to gain power, prestige, influence and great personal luxury – cf. 18:3c. They fell prey to the “love of money” which is the root of all evil according to I Tim. 6:10, and because the type of people warned about in James 5:4-6; Isa. 3:14-15; 5:8 & Amos 4:1; 5:11 & 8:4-6.

Wealth is not the issue. It is not a sin to be rich. Abraham was rich, Job was rich, David was rich, Solomon was rich, etc. The sin that often results from wealth is the desire to have more and more for one’s personal comfort & pleasure, and to use that wealth to influence things in an unethical or immoral way – ie.) to exert power. Certainly it is the evil intention of the merchants of Babylon in the Tribulation that brings their sins to the forefront of God’s attention and earns them His wrath and judgment. Their wealth perishes with them and it is likely their families perish with them as there is no future here – no progeny to carry on the family business.

2. ) All the nations were deceived by Babylon’s sorcery – v. 23c;

This has to do with the occult and Satanic influence that will come out of this Babylon. Sorcery in Greek is “*pharmakeia*”, from where we get our word “pharmacy”. In the NT, this word is usually used to refer to magic or occult practices. This means that not only military might is used to keep the world in check from Babylon, but the signs and wonders – **II Thess. 2:9-10** – deceive many and they are held spell-bound by what they believe is divine power. On top of that, II Thess. 2:11 indicates that God has sent a strong delusion so that people will believe the lies. ②

3. ) Babylon has left a legacy of blood – the orders to kill the saints came out of this world capital – v. 24;

There is no question that the Great Tribulation will be a time of great persecution against ( especially ) Christians and Jews. It is certain that a maniac in power under satanic control will be very creative in his means of torturing and killing his enemies. The lucky ones will die quickly, and the less fortunate slowly and systematically.

We can imagine the cruelty that will be a hallmark of the administration of Antichrist because we have historic examples of those people Satan used to begin similar failed empires – the most famous for our generation being the WW II holocaust and Adolf Hitler. But back throughout history, cruel dictators, megalomaniacs and pompous self-fashioned emperors have exhibited evil towards those they could control in horrible ways. The Caesars – Nero, Caligula, Domitian; Attila the Hun; Bloody Mary who had 283 Protestant Christians murdered during her reign of terror; Ivan the terrible; Josef Stalin ( who murdered 10’s of millions ); Pol Pot; Idi Amin; Saddam Hussein...and on and on and on.

Lord Acton commented famously that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This applies to all humanity ( but not to God ) because man has a sin nature. In the Tribulation, for 42 months, Antichrist will possess absolute power and his Satanic nature will be revealed in his every move – calculated to hurt God and His people – the only ones he can get at. However, God will never be displaced, overcome or defeated, and as we move into the most victorious chapter of the Bible – Rev. 19 – we will see why He is called King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Next lesson – Lesson # 60      Rev. 19: 1-6      Hallelujah!