

VOICES OF VILLAINS

learning good lessons
from bad examples

Babylon's Seduction / Revelation 18

A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

REVELATION 14:8

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

REVELATION 18:1-8

Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again."

REVELATION 18:21

"Babylon's Seduction"

Up to this point we have talked only about villains in the personal sense – individuals acting alone or in concert with others who do deadly, destructive, and despicable things. With the symbolic reference to "Babylon the Great" in the book of Revelation, we are no longer talking about the villainy of one or a few, we are talking about a whole system of villainy – an evil empire with a pervasive culture of corrupting influence and villainous control. There is little doubt that for first century Christians "Babylon" was Revelation's veiled way of speaking about Rome. But through the telescopic vision of these words, we see in the symbol of Rome a re-occurring familiar brand of villainy that seeks our conformity to a way of life that ends only in emptiness and death. We also must "come out of her" (Rev 18:4) – the false system that seeks to make us villains too unless we reject:

1. a materialistic, compassionless & corrupt indulgence of power/privilege/wealth
2. an arrogant assumption of superiority and a vain dismissal of vulnerability and need
3. a blind rejection of the lessons of the past and warnings about the great reversal to come

NEXT WEEKEND: new series – "The Coming of the Son"