

“THE LAMENT OF ECONOMIC RUIN”

Revelation 18:1-24

Theme: God will finally bring justice against the rebellion of sinful men that has characterized the world since the beginning of man's rebellion after the Flood.

I. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE JUDGMENT – *18:1-8*

A. *The Indication of Sin – vv. 1-3*

1. Having described the religious aspect of humanism and its destruction in the previous chapter, we are brought to the economic god and its destruction through a prophetic picture of the destruction of the city of Babylon.
2. Whereas the spiritual aspect of Babylon's influence was pictured previously the description in chapter 18 is of an actual city:
 - a. First, there are no indicators in the context that this is a symbolic or “spiritual” description and therefore ought to be read literally.
 - b. The prophecies in the OT regarding Babylon's utter destruction have never been fulfilled in the manner prophesied and therefore find their completion in the destruction of the literal city of a future Babylon - cp. *Isaiah 13:19-22; 14:22-23; Jeremiah 50:13, 39; 51:37*
 - c. The city of Babylon was the original center of rebellion against God after the Flood and therefore a future city that serves as the hub of the Antichrist's rebellions against God brings us back to the beginning for the purpose of judgment.
3. We are told that *“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.”*
4. This is a new vision and its importance is underscored by means of the details surrounding its revelation.
5. The proclamation of judgment is then stated: *“And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!’”*
6. This is the ultimate fulfillment of the celebrations that were anticipatory – cp. *Revelation 14:8*
7. The reasons for the judgment are indicated:
 - a. It will be the *home of demons* – *“She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird”* – v. 2b; *Isaiah 34:11*
 - b. It will be the *headquarters of depravity* – *“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings*

of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.” - v. 3; James 5:1-5

B. The Invitation to Salvation – v. 4-5

1. It seems that another angel speaks from heaven reminding people that there is safety to be found in God – *“I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’”*
2. Whether this is a call for those already saved, or for those who are elect who need to come to repentance is not clear – but we do know that it is a clear invitation to come to mercy and abandon any participation with those destined for destruction.
3. This seems – again – to take us back to the offense of the original inhabitants of Babylon who sought to make a name for themselves by building a ziggurat up to the heavens as a tribute to their accomplishments – cp. *Genesis 11:4*
4. However, what God said mankind had actually accomplished was that their *“sins have piled up as high as heaven”* causing a monument to their rebellion against Him – *“God has remembered her iniquities.”*
5. All who are willing to repent are invited to flee to the safety of God’s mercy.

C. The Imprecation for Severity – vv. 6-8

1. The same voice that called for the repentant to flee to God’s mercy called for God’s harshest intensity in judgment against the indulgences of Babylon and those who chose to participate in it – *“Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.”*
2. This is a play on the judicial rule of law that was first documented in Hammurabi of Babylon’s code – “Eye for eye; tooth for tooth” – but with intensifications because of the severity of the sinful offenses to God.
3. The specific offenses are provided for us here:
 - a. She is self-satisfied – *“To the degree that she glorified herself ...”*
 - b. She is self-gratifying – *“... and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning;”*
 - c. She is self-sufficient – *“... for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’”*
4. The consequence of her rebellion against God will be her destruction – *“For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who*

judges her is strong.”

5. This is the anticipated fate for Babylon – cp. *Jeremiah 50:29*

II. THE PERSPECTIVES ON THE JUDGMENT – *18:9-20*

A. *The Grief of the Partners* – *vv. 9-19*

1. THE MONARCHS – *vv. 9-10*

- a. The ten kings that are confederated with the Antichrist plus any other ruler will mourn greatly - *“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning.”*
- b. These kings are totally dependent upon Babylon for their power, yet with all their armies and resources of science and technology, they are unable to do anything to save the city – *“... standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city!’”*
- c. The disbelief will then be expressed: *“For in one hour your judgment has come.”* - a reference to the evident divine judgment through plague and pestilence even as God had prophesied.

2. THE MERCHANTS – *vv. 11-17a*

- a. The businessmen are the next to express their grief – *“And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more”*
- b. Whatever economic activity that had survived the seals, trumpets and bowls came to an immediate halt in one day!
- c. A catalog of commerce of all kinds follows in *vv. 12-13* indicating the entire scope of economic ruin that results from this judgment.
- d. These merchants then address the city in lamentation – *“The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.”*
- e. The disbelief of these merchants is as intense as the monarchs – *“The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’”*

3. The Mariners – **vv. 17b-19**
 - a. In addition to being a political power, and an economic power, Babylon will also be an important distribution and shipping center.
 - b. As a result, the final group to grieve will be the mariners: *“And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’”*
 - c. Their disbelief in the tragedy of Babylon’s destruction is like the previous groups: *“And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”*

B. The Gladness of the Persecuted – v. 20

1. However, not everyone will lament – *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”*
2. The long-awaited moment of retribution and vengeance against the worldly system that had persecuted and martyred saints throughout the history of the world finally came.
3. It isn’t the damnation and suffering of sinners that is hailed, but the triumph of righteousness and the exaltation of Christ Jesus and His kingdom that brings such elation in heaven.

III. THE DEGREE PERMANENCE OF THE JUDGMENT – 18:21-24

A. The Illustration of the Degree of Permanence – v. 21

1. In case there was any doubt as to the thoroughness of the destruction of Babylon, God provides an analogy of His judgment.
2. Another angels enters the scene and depicts the judgment – *“Then a strong 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 not be found any longer.’”*
3. This was foreshadowed in the prophecy of Jeremiah – ***Jeremiah 51:61-64***.

B. The Indications of the Degree of Permanence – vv. 22-24

1. So complete will be the judgment and destruction of Babylon, that no normal activities of daily life will take place in it any more:

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- a. There will be no music: *“And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer.”*
 - b. There will be no industry – *“...and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer.”*
 - c. There will be no cooking – *“...and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer.”*
 - d. There will be no light – *“...and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer.”*
 - e. There will be no falling in love – *“...and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer.”*
2. The severity of judgment is then again justified and explained by the provision of three reasons:
- a. Financial manipulation & materialism – *“...for you merchants were the great men of the earth.”*
 - b. Influences of Occultism – *“...because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”*
 - c. Persecution of God’s people – *“And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”*