

## **Revelation Pt 41 Babylon Is Finished**

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# **Introduction**

Last week we sat with the mourners.

Kings stood at a distance and watched Babylon burn. Merchants catalogued their losses. Sailors threw dust on their heads. Three groups. Three laments. And running through all of them like a drumbeat, the same phrase repeated: "In one hour she has been destroyed."

Everyone who built their life on Babylon watched everything go up in smoke. And not one of them repented. Not one of them grieved the victims. They grieved their own loss. Their tears were entirely about themselves.

That's where we left it. With smoke rising and the world weeping.

But there was one verse we touched on before we closed. A hinge verse. A pivot that changed everything.

Verse 20.

### **Revelation 18:20 BSB**

<sup>20</sup> Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced for you His judgment against her.

Same fire. Same smoke. Same city burning.

Completely different response.

The world stands far off and weeps. Heaven is called to worship.

Tonight we finish the chapter. And what we find in these last five verses is not more mourning. It's a verdict. A symbolic act that seals Babylon's fate permanently. A catalog of silences that shows us what total destruction actually looks like. And a final indictment that tells us exactly why the judgment was just.

But underneath all of it, the thing I want you to see tonight is this: the judge is Jesus. This is not impersonal cosmic justice grinding forward on its own. This is the One who bled for His people, who heard the cries of the martyrs, who keeps every record, rendering a final verdict. And that changes everything about how we read this passage.

Before we get into the text, we need to carry something forward from last week. John is writing to suffering people. Churches being pressured. Believers who lost their livelihoods because they refused to play by Babylon's rules.

People who looked at the power and wealth and reach of the Roman system and wondered, quietly, whether God was paying attention.

Revelation 18:20–24 is His answer.

He was paying attention. He kept the record. And the judge has spoken.

## Read the Text: Revelation 18:20–24 (BSB)

### **Revelation 18:20–24 BSB**

<sup>20</sup> Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced for you His judgment against her.

<sup>21</sup> Then a mighty angel picked up a stone the size of a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be cast down, never to be seen again.

<sup>22</sup> And the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will never ring out in you again. Nor will any craftsmen of any trade be found in you again, nor the sound of a millstone be heard in you again.

<sup>23</sup> The light of a lamp will never shine in you again, and the voices of a bride and bridegroom will never call out in you again. For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”

<sup>24</sup> And there was found in her the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth.

# Walking Through the Text

## 1. Heaven's Verdict (v. 20)

### **Revelation 18:20 BSB**

<sup>20</sup> Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced for you His judgment against her.

After three rounds of lament, the tone breaks completely.

The kings wept. The merchants mourned. The sailors threw dust on their heads. And now, before John moves into the final act of the chapter, he stops and addresses someone new. Not the mourners. Not the world standing far off watching the smoke rise.

He addresses the saints.

"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles

and prophets."

This is the only moment in the entire Babylon section where God's people are directly spoken to. Everything before this was description. We were watching. We were listening to the laments. But here, in verse 20, we are pulled into the passage. We are given something to do with what we've just seen.

And what we're told to do is rejoice.

That might feel uncomfortable at first. Rejoicing over a city's destruction doesn't sit easily with us. We're used to being told to pray for our enemies, to love those who persecute us, to seek the good of the city where we live. So what does it mean to rejoice here?

We need to look carefully at what the rejoicing is actually about.

The second half of the verse gives us the reason: "for God has pronounced judgment in your favor against her."

That phrase is a legal term. It's courtroom language. God has not simply punished Babylon. He has rendered a verdict. He has ruled in favor of His people against the system that was crushing them. The saints aren't being called to celebrate destruction for its own sake. They're being called to recognize that the judge has spoken. And the

judge ruled for them.

Think about what that meant to the original readers. People who had lost their businesses because they wouldn't join trade guilds tied to emperor worship. People sitting in prison because they wouldn't burn incense to Caesar. People who had watched friends and family members martyred for their faith, and who had been quietly wondering whether God saw any of it.

He saw it. He kept the record. And now He has ruled.

This is why justice is not just an outcome in this verse. It is a cause for worship. The saints don't simply feel relieved. They rejoice. And that tells us something important about how God's people are meant to relate to His justice. When God judges rightly, the right response is not just quiet satisfaction. It is worship. Because every act of God's true justice is a revelation of who He is.

And who is the judge here? This is where we need to slow down and make something explicit that the rest of Revelation has been building toward. The judge is Jesus (All Judgment has been given to the Son John 5:22). Not an abstract divine force. Not impersonal cosmic justice. The same Jesus who in Revelation 1 walks among the lampstands with eyes like fire and feet like burnished bronze. The same Jesus who in Revelation 5 is the only one found worthy to open the scroll. The same Jesus who bled

for the people Babylon was killing.

He is the one who rendered this verdict.

That changes the emotional register of the whole passage. This is not cold judgment. This is a shepherd who knows every sheep by name, who saw what was done to them, who promised He would not forget, making good on that promise.

The rejoicing of heaven is not the rejoicing of people glad to see suffering. It is the rejoicing of people who have finally seen the promise kept. Who have finally seen the judge stand up and rule. Who have finally seen the One they love vindicated in front of the whole world.

Psalm 96 captures this exact moment. "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad... for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness." That's not a threat. That's a promise. And verse 20 is that promise being fulfilled.

## **2. The Millstone (v. 21)**

### **Revelation 18:21 BSB**

<sup>21</sup> Then a mighty angel picked up a stone the size of a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be cast down, never to

be seen again.

After the call to rejoice, John gives us a picture.

A mighty angel lifts a stone. Not a small stone. A millstone. These were massive grinding stones, sometimes several feet across, heavy enough that it took an animal to turn them. The angel lifts one and throws it into the sea.

And that's it. Babylon is gone.

The act itself is the message. John is not describing the mechanics of how Babylon is destroyed. He is showing us the nature of the destruction. Sudden. Violent. Irreversible. You don't fish a millstone out of the sea. You don't recover what sank that fast and that deep. The stone goes down and it does not come back up.

This image comes directly from Jeremiah 51. After Jeremiah finished dictating all the disasters that would come on Babylon, he gave the scroll to a man named Seraiah and told him to go to Babylon, read the scroll aloud, then tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. And as it sank he was to say: "So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her."

John's readers who knew their scriptures would have felt this immediately. This is not a new story. This is the same story. Jeremiah announced Babylon's end. God carried it

out. And now John is showing the final fulfillment of everything Jeremiah saw. The stone goes into the water. The city goes down. And it does not rise.

But there is another millstone image worth bringing in here. Jesus used it himself in Matthew 18:6. He said it would be better for someone to have a large millstone hung around their neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea than to cause one of His little ones to stumble.

Babylon caused generations of God's little ones to stumble. She pressured them, seduced them, persecuted them, and killed them. The millstone that Jesus described as the fitting end for those who harm His people is exactly what Babylon receives. The image is not accidental. It is just.

The angel then speaks. And what he says sets the tone for everything that follows in verses 22 and 23.

"With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again."

Never to be found again.

That phrase is going to repeat through the next two verses like an echo. John uses it five times across verses 21 through 23. Never again. Never again. Never again. He wants us to feel the permanence. This is not a setback for Babylon. It is not a pause. It is not a defeat she will recover from and

rebuild.

She is gone. Permanently. Completely. Finally.

For the persecuted believers reading this letter, that word "never" was not frightening. It was relief. The system that had been grinding them down, that had seemed permanent and unstoppable, that had looked like it would outlast everything, was not coming back. The judge had spoken. The stone had sunk. And the water had closed over it.

There is something worth sitting with here. Babylon looked like bedrock. She looked like the fixed center of the world. Generations of people had built their lives on the assumption that she would always be there. And a single angel, in a single act, threw her into the sea.

That is what John wants us to understand about every Babylon. Every system that sets itself up against God, no matter how permanent it looks, no matter how deeply embedded it is in the rhythms of ordinary life, is one moment away from the bottom of the sea. Not because the world is fragile, but because God is sovereign. And He does not share His throne.

### **3. Total Silence (vv. 22–23)**

**Revelation 18:22–23 BSB**

<sup>22</sup> And the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will never ring out in you again. Nor will any craftsmen of any trade be found in you again, nor the sound of a millstone be heard in you again.

<sup>23</sup> The light of a lamp will never shine in you again, and the voices of a bride and bridegroom will never call out in you again. For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”

The stone hits the water. Babylon sinks. And then comes the silence.

John gives us a catalog of absences. Not a list of things destroyed. A list of things that will never be heard or seen again. And the way he builds the list is deliberate. He moves from the grand to the intimate. From the public sounds of a thriving city down to the quiet light of a single lamp and the private joy of a wedding.

The music goes first.

Harpists. Musicians. Flute players. Trumpeters. These are the sounds of culture and celebration. In the ancient world, music filled public spaces. It marked festivals and feasts. It was woven into the rhythms of daily life. A city without music is not just quieter. It is emptier in a way that is hard to describe. Something human has gone out of it.

Then the craftsmen go silent.

No craftsman of any trade. The workshops close. The hammers stop. The looms go still. All the skilled labor that produced Babylon's wealth, that filled her markets with goods, that kept her economy running, goes quiet. The industry that made her the commercial center of the world simply stops.

Then the millstone.

This is a different millstone than the one the angel threw. This is the sound of grain being ground. The daily, ordinary sound of food being prepared. The background noise of a functioning household. When the millstone goes silent, it means people are no longer eating. Life at its most basic level has stopped.

Then the light.

No lamp will shine in you again. The city goes dark. Not just at night. Permanently. There is something deeply unsettling about this image. Light is one of the most basic markers of human presence. When you drive past a house at night and the lights are on, you know someone is home. When the lights are out, the house feels empty. Babylon's lights go out and they stay out. Nobody is home. Nobody is coming back.

And then the most intimate silence of all.

The voice of the bride and bridegroom will never ring out in you again.

Wedding joy. The sound of a celebration that marks the beginning of something new, of two lives joined together, of hope for the future. In the Old Testament, the presence of wedding celebration in a city was a sign of God's blessing. And the silencing of it was one of the most devastating signs of judgment. Jeremiah used this exact image multiple times when describing what God's judgment on Israel would look and sound like.

John is drawing directly from Jeremiah 25:10, where God says: "I will banish from them the sound of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp." Read that list again. Millstones. Lamplight. Bride and bridegroom. John is quoting it almost word for word. His readers who knew Jeremiah would have recognized it immediately. What God once used as a warning to His own people is now being fulfilled permanently in Babylon.

But here is where John does something that should stop us completely.

The wedding joy that goes silent in Babylon is not the last

word on wedding joy. Turn the page. Revelation 19:7 arrives almost immediately after this silence:

"Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready."

The voice of the bride and bridegroom does not disappear from the universe when Babylon falls. It just moves. It moves from a city built on exploitation and pride to the celebration that God has been planning since before the foundation of the world. The wedding Babylon hosted was built on lies and blood. The wedding coming in chapter 19 is built on the righteousness of Christ and the faithfulness of His people.

Babylon's silence is not the end of joy. It is the clearing of the stage for the only joy that lasts.

Now John adds two final indictments before the verdict in verse 24.

First: "Your merchants were the great men of the earth."

This sounds like a compliment. It isn't. It's an accusation. Babylon took the commercial class, the traders and merchants, and elevated them to the status of royalty. She organized her entire society around the accumulation of wealth. She made money the measure of greatness. And in

doing so she created a world where the things that actually matter, justice, mercy, the worth of human souls, were pushed aside in favor of profit.

Second: "By your sorcery all the nations were deceived."

The word John uses here is pharmakeia. We get our word pharmacy from it. In the ancient world it carried the idea of a substance or practice that appeared to heal but actually poisoned. Babylon's promises looked like life. They looked like security and prosperity and comfort. They were poison. She told the nations that her system was the path to flourishing. And they believed her. And they built their lives on her. And when she sank, they had nothing left.

This is the nature of Babylon's deepest sin. Not just that she was corrupt. But that she made corruption look attractive. She didn't drag people into her system by force. She seduced them. She made them want what she was offering. And by the time they realized what they had actually consumed, it was too late.

The nations were deceived. But the deception was not innocent. The kings and merchants and sailors we met in the earlier verses were not naive victims. They chose Babylon because Babylon was good for them. The pharmakeia worked because they wanted it to work. They wanted the prosperity and the power and the luxury. And Babylon gave it to them. And they never stopped to ask

what it was costing them or who was paying the price.

That is a word worth sitting with for a long time. Because Babylon has never stopped making her promises sound like medicine.

## 4. The Final Verdict (v. 24)

### **Revelation 18:24 BSB**

<sup>24</sup> And there was found in her the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth.

After the silence, one more verse.

Just one. Short. Direct. No symbolic act. No angel speaking. No list of luxuries or laments. Just a single sentence that lands like a stone.

In her was found the blood.

This is the reason. This is why the verdict was just. This is why heaven rejoiced and the stone sank and the lights went out and the music stopped. Not because God is arbitrary. Not because He exercises power for its own sake. But because Babylon had blood on her hands. Real blood. From real people. And God kept the record.

The language here is forensic. "In her was found." This is the language of an investigation that has concluded. Of

evidence examined and confirmed. A verdict is not rendered until the evidence has been weighed. And when the judge looked at Babylon, this is what He found. Not just corruption. Not just pride. Not just exploitation. Blood.

The blood of prophets. The people God sent to speak truth into the darkness. Babylon silenced them.

The blood of saints. Ordinary believers who refused to bow, who wouldn't burn incense to Caesar, who held onto their faith when it cost them everything. Babylon killed them.

And then the phrase broadens. "And of all who had been slain on the earth."

This is not a narrow indictment. John is reaching back through all of history. Every person killed because they stood for what was right. Every martyr. Every innocent victim of systems built on power and exploitation. Jesus used nearly identical language in Matthew 23:35 when He held Jerusalem accountable for "all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah."

The guilt of a system that persecutes the righteous accumulates. It does not expire. It does not get written off. God does not forget. And when the verdict finally comes, it accounts for everything. Every name. Every death. Every drop of blood that cried out from the ground the way Abel's

did in Genesis 4.

This verse is also the answer to a question asked earlier in Revelation. Back in chapter 6, when the fifth seal was opened, John saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar. And they cried out with a loud voice: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?"

They were told to wait a little longer.

Revelation 18:24 is the end of that wait.

The judge looked at Babylon. He found the blood. He rendered the verdict. The martyrs who cried out from under the altar asking how long finally have their answer. Not just a promise. An accomplished fact. The blood was found. The guilty party has been judged. The judge is Jesus, and He did not forget a single name.

There is something here that goes beyond justice as we typically think of it. We tend to think of justice as a transaction. A wrong is committed, a punishment is assigned, and the scales balance. But what John is showing us is something more personal than that. God does not run a transaction. He keeps a relationship. He knows His people by name. He hears their cries. He marks their suffering. And when He acts, He acts not as a distant administrator balancing cosmic ledgers but as the One who loved them,

who bled for them, who promised He would never leave them or forsake them.

The blood of the saints was not just evidence in a legal case. It was personal to Him.

That is why heaven erupts in worship in the very next verse. Not because destruction is satisfying. But because the judge has shown himself to be exactly who He said He was. Faithful. True. Just. The One who sees every sparrow that falls and knows every hair on every head did not look away from His people when Babylon was killing them. He saw. He recorded. And He answered.

For anyone in a season where God's justice seems distant or slow, where you are watching wrong things prosper and right things suffer, where you are quietly asking the same question the martyrs asked under the altar, this verse is a fixed point to stand on.

He found the blood. He always finds it. The verdict always comes.

And the judge is Jesus.

## **Key Themes**

## **Jesus is the righteous judge.**

This is the thread that runs through the entire passage. The justice in these verses is not impersonal. It is not a cosmic force running on autopilot. The judge is Jesus. The same One who in Revelation 1 walks among the lampstands with eyes like fire. The same One in Revelation 5 who was the only one found worthy to open the scroll. The same One who bled for the people Babylon was killing. He is the one who called heaven to rejoice, whose verdict was rendered in favor of His people, who found the blood and held Babylon accountable for it. Every act of judgment in this passage flows from a person who knows His people by name and did not look away.

## **God's justice is public, final, and morally grounded.**

Babylon is not destroyed arbitrarily. She is held accountable for specific sins against specific people. The verdict in verse 20, the millstone in verse 21, the silences in verses 22 and 23, and the blood found in verse 24 are all connected. The punishment fits the crime. What Babylon did to others was done to her. And it was done in a way the whole watching world could see. There is nothing hidden about this

judgment. The smoke rose where everyone could observe it.

## **The blood of God's people is not forgotten.**

From Abel forward, God keeps the record. The martyrs in Revelation 6 asked how long. Revelation 18:24 is the answer. Every name. Every drop of blood. Every person who paid a price for faithfulness and wondered if anyone noticed. God noticed. The evidence was gathered. The verdict was rendered. Not one person who suffered for the sake of the Lamb was forgotten by the Lamb.

## **Heaven celebrates what the world cannot understand.**

The same fire that breaks the world frees the saints. The kings and merchants and sailors stand far off and weep. Heaven is called to rejoice. The difference is not cruelty versus compassion. The difference is home. The people who built their lives on Babylon lost everything when she fell. The people who belonged to the Lamb lost nothing that lasts. Where you are standing when Babylon burns tells you everything about where you actually live.

# **The silence of Babylon gives way to the song of heaven.**

The wedding joy that goes quiet in verse 23 breaks out again in Revelation 19:7. The voice of the bride and bridegroom is not gone from the universe. It just isn't Babylon's anymore. What Babylon promised but could never actually deliver, lasting joy, real celebration, a future worth having, the Lamb delivers completely. The silence at the end of chapter 18 is not the end of the story. It is the clearing of the stage.

## **Babylon's power is not permanent.**

One angel. One stone. One throw. And she was never found again. What looked like the fixed and permanent center of the world was gone in one hour. Every generation has its Babylon. Every generation has a system that looks like it will outlast everything. And every Babylon answers to the same judge. Not one of them gets the final word.

## **Application**

1. The martyrs in Revelation 6 cried out asking how long. If you are honest, you have probably asked the same question. You have watched something wrong go

unchallenged. You have seen people who play by Babylon's rules prosper while people who refused to play by those rules suffered. And you have wondered quietly whether God was paying attention. Verses 20 and 24 are His answer. He was paying attention. He kept the record. The verdict came. How does knowing that change the way you pray in the seasons when justice feels absent?

2. God ruled in favor of His people. He rendered a verdict for them in the heavenly court. Jesus is not just your savior. He is your advocate. He is your judge. He is the one standing between you and every accusation, every system, every power that has tried to crush what He loves. What does it mean for your daily life to actually live inside that reality rather than just believing it in the abstract?

3. The silence that falls on Babylon is the silence of a life built on the wrong things. Music. Work. Light. Wedding joy. All of it gone. Not because those things are bad but because they were built on a foundation that could not hold them. Think honestly about what you are building on right now. Your career. Your finances. Your reputation. Your comfort. If the thing you are trusting most were thrown into the sea tomorrow, what would be left? What does your answer tell you about where your foundation actually is?

4. Babylon deceived the nations with pharmakeia. Something that looked like medicine but was poison. She didn't force anyone. She made her promises sound like life and people chose to believe her. The seduction is still working. What in your life right now looks like flourishing but might be slowly working against the things that actually matter? What are you consuming that you have never stopped to examine?

5. God's people do not need to take vengeance. Romans 12:19 says vengeance belongs to God. Revelation 18:20 shows Him exercising it. That means you can put down what you have been carrying. The wrongs done to you, the injustices you cannot fix, the people who have never been held accountable for what they did. You are not the judge. Jesus is. And He is better at it than you would be. What would it look like to actually release that to Him?

## Closing

The chapter ends not with a rescue. Not with a negotiation. Not with Babylon being given one more chance to reform herself.

It ends with a stone hitting the water and silence spreading out from there.

The music stopped. The craftsmen went home and never came back. The lamps went dark. The sound of wedding celebration, the most human and hopeful sound a city can produce, went quiet. And in the silence, the last thing John tells us is what the judge found when He looked at her.

Blood.

The blood of prophets. The blood of saints. The blood of all who had been slain on the earth. Every name. Every person. Every cry that went up from under the altar asking how long. God found it all. He kept every record. He forgot no one.

And He answered.

That is what this passage is. It is an answer. To every believer who ever watched wrong things prosper and right things suffer and wondered quietly whether God was paying attention. To every person who paid a price to stay out of Babylon's system and wasn't sure it was worth it. To every martyr who died holding onto a promise that sometimes felt very far away.

He was paying attention. He is always paying attention.

The judge is Jesus. Not a distant administrator. Not an impersonal force. The One with eyes like fire who walks

among His people and knows every name. The One who was himself killed by the kind of system Babylon represents. The One who rose anyway. The One who opened the scroll in Revelation 5 because He alone was worthy. That One looked at Babylon, found the blood, and rendered His verdict.

And heaven rejoiced.

Not because destruction is satisfying. But because the judge proved himself to be exactly who He said He was. Faithful and true. The One who sees every sparrow that falls did not look away from His people when Babylon was crushing them. He saw. He recorded. He answered.

Now here is what I want you to carry out of this room tonight.

Babylon is silent. But the story is not over. The silence at the end of chapter 18 is not the silence of an ending. It is the silence before something breaks out that has no ending at all.

Turn the page. Revelation 19:6–7 arrives like a wave:

*"Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder, saying: 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and celebrate and give Him*

*glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.'"*

The voice of the bride and bridegroom went silent in Babylon. And then it broke out in heaven louder than thunder. What Babylon promised and could never deliver, real joy, lasting celebration, a future that no one can take away in one hour or in a thousand years, the Lamb delivers completely and permanently.

Babylon's merchants are standing far off watching smoke rise. The bride of the Lamb is getting ready for a wedding.

The mourners lost everything. Those who belong to the Lamb have lost nothing that lasts.

So the question this chapter leaves us with is the same one it has been building toward all along. When the smoke rises, where are you standing? With the merchants cataloguing what they've lost? Or with heaven, saying hallelujah?

Because the judge has spoken. The stone has sunk. The lights are out in Babylon.

And the wedding is almost here.