**“FALLEN, FALLEN, IS BABYLON THE GREAT!”**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 18**

Last week we observed the religious Babylon. “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earthly abominations” – that was God’s name for the one world church endorsed by the antichrist and most world leaders. We see at the end of Ch 17 the destruction of this religious Babylon. No details are given about its demise. All we know is that at some point the union between evil church and state is broken. The antichrist and the world’s leaders he controls begin to hate the established state religion and turn on her. In an internal civil war of sorts, the evil government of the antichrist rids itself of the false church organization it had previously supported. Evil destroys evil, so to speak, and God’s purposes are fulfilled.

But the question I kept asking myself is “Why would the antichrist destroy the religious organization he had backed?” One of the commentaries I read, The Revelation of Jesus Christ by John Walvoord, a former DTS professor. Dr. Walvoord theorizes that about midway thru the Tribulation the antichrist gains enough political power to proclaim himself dictator of the entire world. At the pinnacle of his political career he no longer needs the help and power of the church. So, she becomes expendable. She along with her hollow version of Christianity are destroyed. The antichrist then substitutes the final form of wickedness in the area of religion, the worship of himself. I think that Dr. Walvoord’s theory is quite plausible. And do you know where Dr. Walvoord got his theory from? The Book of Daniel. Listen to the following passage describing the actions of the antichrist during the Tribulation:

“The king [the antichrist] will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed, but only until the time of wrath is completed. For what has been determined will surely take place. He will have no respect for the gods of his ancestors, or for the god loved by women, or for any other god, for he will boast that he is greater than them all. Instead of these, he will worship the god of fortresses [the god of power]… He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of authority and dividing the land among them as their reward.” (Daniel 11:36-39 NLT)

The antichrist will be arrogant and proud and in full control. He will make himself to be god-like (very similar to other powerful world leaders such as Hitler, Stalin, Alexander the Great, Napolean). He will have no respect for religion or religious heritages. He will not recognize any formal religion. Instead he will claim himself to be God. Those who support him will be rewarded with wealth and positions of power.

Here in Revelation Ch 18 the focus is on the political and commercial Babylon – that evil world regime of the antichrist that rules in the final days of the Tribulation.

V 1-3: “After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.’”

It’s clear from verse 1 that the events of Ch 18 take place after the events described in Chapter 17 because it says, ”after this I saw another angel coming down from heaven…” This second angel announces the utter destruction of the antichrist’s regime. He states the reason for it, which is, her intense immorality. The government of the antichrist is wholly given over to Satan’s control and to moral depravity. The evil world leaders and businessmen who follow the antichrist are motivated only by greed and power. The so-called “good life” promoted by the antichrist will turn out not to be so good after all!

The term “unclean bird,” v 2, is a reference to an evil spirit. Jesus used this same “bird” analogy in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Matt 13:32. There Jesus describes the birds of the air coming to nest in the branches of a tree, which I believe to be a reference to Satan and the presence of evil comfortably residing in the church.

V 4-5: “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’”

“My people” is a reference to believers in Jesus. God’s message to the Christians of the Tribulation who remain alive is to separate themselves completely from the evil world system. “Come out from her.” Avoid her sins. Don’t even associate with her!

This is the same message that the Apostle John had written to the churches in Asia Minor in First John: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15-17) *[some things never change]*

Clearly God’s people are directed in Scripture to be different from the world. We’re told not to participate in the world’s evil activity. What was true in John’s day is true today. But there is an even greater sense of urgency here in Ch 18, at the end of the Tribulation, in the last days. God is preparing to bring down His wrath upon the antichrist. The message to believers is to distance yourself from his evil system.

V 6-7: “Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’”

In the O.T. we read where Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar trampled down and destroyed Jerusalem. The Jewish people were indignant. They cried out in their captivity for God to repay Babylon for what she had done. The psalmist expressed clearly the feelings the Jews had for the Babylonians: “O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!” (Psalm 137:8-9) Pretty harsh words.

Well, eventually God’s judgment did fall on ancient Babylon and in 514 B.C. the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire. Here we see that this new Babylon, this regime of the antichrist, is even more wicked than ancient Babylon. It is about to be repaid double for what it has done to God’s people. Her numerous atrocities will be paid back two-fold.

The arrogance of the antichrist is typified at the end of verse 7. “In her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’” What is she saying? “I am the queen upon my throne. I am in charge, not God. I am no helpless widow. I am financially secure. I do not need God. I will not experience sorrow. God’s a liar. He won’t hurt me.” The antichrist and all who follow him are completely defiant. But they are in for a rude awakening!

In Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool, the man says pridefully to himself, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:19-20) They won’t be yours anymore because I am about to kill you!

V 8: “For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

Judgment day for the antichrist has arrived!

V 9-10: “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. 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.’”

Those who put all their stock in the worldly system of the antichrist are going to lose it all. Here we see weeping from grown men. Why are these big, tough, successful politicians and businessmen crying? Are they sorrowful for what they have done? No, they’re crying because they lost everything. They are no different from the little boy who defied his mother by throwing the ball in the house. When the mother finally has enough she takes it away from him. He cries and carries on. Why? Not because he is repentant for throwing the ball in the house. He cries because he lost his ball. He cries because he is hurt personally. Like the disobedient boy who lost his ball the antichrist and his followers have only themselves to blame. In essence what we see here is a bunch of crybabies who have defied God over and over again and now they weep as they watch their cherished Babylon burn to the ground.

V 11-19: “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 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, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. 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! The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ‘Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! 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 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, ‘What city was like the great city?’ 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.’”

What an utterly pathetic scene this is! Greedy, materialistic, self-sufficient, arrogant fools carrying on because they lost their wealth. Not one sign or inkling or repentance in all of these verses. Just a bunch of spoiled, whining fools! But the mood in heaven is quite different as the smoke from Babylon rises…

V 20: “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

“Rejoice!” In modern terms we might say, “Let’s party!” It’s quite a different scene in heaven isn’t it than what we see down on earth. Heaven rejoices at the demise of the world, the flesh and the devil.

V 21: “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;’”

Babylon will be destroyed never to be heard from again. If I go out into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and throw a boulder into the sea and then I tell you that I will give you $10,000 cash if you will go retrieve it, what would you say to me? “There’s no way, Chris!” Everyone knows that if you throw a boulder into the sea, it is gone forever.

There is an interesting sidelight here concerning the judgment pronounced in verse 21. In the O.T. the prophet Jeremiah uttered a similar prophecy against ancient Babylon. He said,

“When you finish reading this book, tie a stone to it and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, and say, ‘Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disaster that I am bringing upon her, and they shall become exhausted.’” (Jeremiah 51:63-64)

The parallels between the two judgments are quite interesting.

V 22-23: “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, 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.”

It’s all over for you, Babylon! All activities in the antichrist’s capital cease. No music, no light and no happiness will be found in the ungodly realm of the antichrist anymore.

Now, just in case you might be feeling a little sorry for poor old Babylon, the chapter concludes with a reminder of the reason why she has been doomed for destruction…

V 24: “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

God holds the antichrist and his government personally responsible for killing His dear saints and His prophets during the Tribulation. The antichrist is the one who martyred all of those who boldly declared God’s truth. Their blood is all over him. Like the kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar, like the family cat caught with the feathers of the parakeet in its mouth, the antichrist and his cohorts cannot hide their obvious guilt. And so they are doomed.

Yes, the great Babylon is fallen! The kingdom of the antichrist crashes and burns. Just and swift is her fall and we will see all the vivid details played out in Chapter 19.

Application. God’s mercy is available to all today. God receives anybody who is willing to confess and repent of their sins and turn to Him for mercy through His Son, Jesus Christ. Only those who have repented and turned to Jesus for salvation will be able to escape God’s wrath in the end. That is our message, isn’t it?

Well, the stage is set for Jesus to return with His saints. He is going to wage war against the forces of the antichrist at Armageddon. In closing let me remind you that today we live in the age of grace. But time – it is running out. The clock is winding down. The ground rush of the last days is coming up fast. The question is, are you ready?