

"THE BOOK OF REVELATION"

Chapter Eighteen

In this chapter we find the fall of "Babylon the great" proclaimed, and the great mourning over her by those in the world. **The fall of Babylon is proclaimed** by an angel with great authority, who illuminated the earth with his glory. The reasons for her fall include how the nations and kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and how the merchants have become rich through her abundance. Meanwhile, a voice from heaven calls for the people of God to come out of her lest they receive the plagues to come upon her. Her judgment will involve death, mourning, famine, and utter destruction by fire, for it is the Lord God who judges her (1-8).

The fall of Babylon is mourned by the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her, and the merchants and sea-traders who had become rich by her. They all cry out *"Alas, alas, that great city..."* as they observe her judgment. They bemoan that in just one hour her riches came to nothing and she has become desolate. On the other hand, heaven itself, along with the apostles and prophets, are called to rejoice, because God has avenged them on her (9-20).

Finally, a mighty angel throws a large stone into sea to depict with what great violence Babylon will be thrown down. The sounds and sights of music, crafts, even weddings will be gone. **The fall of Babylon is justified**, for her merchants were great, by her sorcery the nations were deceived, and in her was found the blood of prophets, saints, and all those slain on the earth (21-24).

What is this chapter describing? If the date of the book suggested in the introduction is correct (spring, 70 A.D.) , and **Jerusalem** is indeed the "harlot", then this chapter likely refers to its destruction by the Romans in August, 70 A.D. This would be in harmony with **Re 17:16**, where those who first supported the harlot eventually turned on her. So it was with Jerusalem, who depended upon the approval of the Roman authorities to persecute the church, and later became the object of Roman persecution herself. Very fitting is the depiction of Jerusalem as a harlot, for she who should have been a great spiritual city had become a great commercial center by virtue of the roads that passed through her between Europe, Asia and Africa. Her spiritual adultery was also manifested by rejecting the many prophets and apostles sent to her (cf. **Mt 23:31-39** with **Re 17:6; 18:20,24; 19:2**).

But if **Rome** (in particular her commercial and immoral spirit) is the "harlot", then this chapter may describe the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. The statements in **Re 18:3,9-19** ("all the nations..." and "the merchants of the earth...") seem to fit Rome better than Jerusalem. The fall of "Babylon, the harlot" was due to her treatment of apostles, prophets, and saints (**Re 18:20,24**). When Revelation was written, Rome had already killed Peter and Paul, and by the time of Rome's fall, there had been at least ten periods of persecutions by Rome against the church. Rome, like Jerusalem, certainly qualifies as "Babylon, the harlot!"

POINTS TO PONDER

- * The pronouncement and depiction of the fall of "Babylon the great"
- * The reasons why Babylon would receive such terrible judgment
- * The identity of "that great city Babylon, that mighty city"

OUTLINE

I. THE FALL OF BABYLON PROCLAIMED (1-8)

A. BY AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN (1-3)

1. John sees an angel coming down from heaven
 - a. Having great authority
 - b. Illuminating the earth with his glory
2. The angel cries mightily with a loud voice
 - a. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen
 - b. She has become...
 - 1) A dwelling place of demons
 - 2) A prison for every foul spirit
 - 3) A cage for every unclean and hated bird
 - c. With her...
 - 1) The nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication
 - 2) The kings of the earth have committed fornication
 - 3) The merchants of the earth have become rich

B. BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN (4-8)

1. Calling God's people to come out of her
 - a. Lest they share in her sins and her plagues
 - b. For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities
 2. Calling for judgment to be rendered her
 - a. Render her just as she rendered them
 - b. Repay her double according to her works
 - c. In the cup she has mixed, mix double for her
 - d. To the degree she glorified herself and lived luxuriously...
 - 1) Give her torment and sorrow
 - 2) For she says in heart that she is a queen and will not see sorrow as a widow
 - e. Her plagues will come in one day...
 - 1) Death, mourning, and famine
 - 2) Utterly burned with fire
- For great is the Lord God who judges her

II. THE FALL OF BABYLON MOURNED (9-20)

A. BY THE KINGS OF THE EARTH (9-10)

1. Those who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her
2. They shall weep and lament when they see the smoke of her burning
3. They shall stand afar off for fear of her torment, saying...
 - a. "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!"
 - b. "For in one hour your judgment has come."

B. BY THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH (11-17a)

1. They shall weep and mourn over her
2. For no one buys their merchandise anymore
3. All that they longed for, both rich and splendid, they shall

find no more

4. The merchants shall stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing...
 - a. "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!"
 - b. "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing."

C. BY THE TRADERS AND TRAVELERS ON THE SEA (17b-19)

1. They stood at a distance, crying when they saw the smoke of her burning, "What is like this great city?"
2. Throwing dust on their heads, they cried out, weeping and wailing...
 - a. "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth!"
 - b. "For in one hour she is made desolate."

D. BUT NOT BY THE HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS (20)

1. They are to rejoice over her
2. For God has avenged them on her

III. THE FALL OF BABYLON JUSTIFIED (21-24)

A. THE EXTENT OF HER FALL ILLUSTRATED (21-23a)

1. By a mighty angel...
 - a. Who took a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea
 - b. Who then proclaims "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."
2. Neither shall be heard or seen in her...
 - a. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters
 - b. A craftsman of any craft
 - c. The sound of a millstone
 - d. The light of a lamp
 - e. The voice of bridegroom and bride

B. THE EXTENT OF HER FALL JUSTIFIED (23b-24)

1. For her merchants were the great men of the earth
2. For by her sorcery all the nations were deceived
3. For in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who slain on the earth

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- The fall of Babylon proclaimed (1-8)
- The fall of Babylon to be mourned (9-20)
- The fall of Babylon justified (21-24)

2) Who proclaims the fall of Babylon? (1-2)

- An angel with great authority, whose glory illuminated the earth

3) What is said concerning nations, kings and merchants in regards to Babylon? (3)

- Nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication
- Kings have committed fornication with her

- Merchants have become rich through the abundance of her luxury
- 4) **What does a voice from heaven implore the people of God? Why? (4-5)**
 - Come out of her, lest they share in her sins and receive of her plagues
 - Her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities
 - 5) **To what degree will Babylon be judged? (6-7)**
 - Just as she did to others
 - Double according to her works
 - To the degree she lived in glory and luxury, she will suffer torment and sorrow
 - 6) **What plagues will come to her in one day? Her ultimate end? (8)**
 - Death, mourning, and famine
 - Utterly burned with fire
 - 7) **What first group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? (9)**
 - The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her
 - 8) **What will they say as they see the smoke of her burning from a distance? (10)**
 - "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!"
 - "For in one hour your judgment has come."
 - 9) **What second group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? Why? (11)**
 - The merchants of the earth
 - No one buys their merchandise anymore
 - 10) **What will they say as they stand afar off, weeping and wailing? (16-17a)**
 - "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with great gold and precious stones and pearls!"
 - "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing."
 - 11) **What third group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? (17b)**
 - Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and sea-traders
 - 12) **What do they say as they see the smoke of her burning? (18-19)**
 - "What is like this great city?"
 - "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth!"
 - "For in one hour she is made desolate."
 - 13) **Who is told to rejoice over the fall of Babylon? Why? (20)**
 - Heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets
 - For God has avenged them on her
 - 14) **What did a mighty angel do and say? (21)**
 - Throw a great millstone into the sea
 - "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."

15) What did the angel say would not be seen or heard in Babylon anymore? (22-23a)

- The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters
- Craftsmen, or the sound of a millstone
- The light of a lamp, or the voice of bridegroom and bride

16) What two reasons are given for her downfall? (23a-24)

- By her sorcery all the nations were deceived
- In her was found the blood of prophets, saints, and of all those slain on the earth