

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- Chapter 17 showed us the very graphic rise and fall of the **“harlot” who represented all false religions, those who do not hold true to God’s Word**. She is called **“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”** Babylon throughout history and throughout God’s Word is a type, a symbol, for everything in opposition to God. In chapter 17 Babylon is portrayed as a harlot, a prostitute that has corrupted God’s Word into a false form of worship. This final apostate “church” is destroyed by the kings of the earth.
- In this chapter 18, the story of the demise and destruction of Babylon continues, but in this chapter **Babylon is portrayed more as a commercial system, a way of doing business, the way of life, so to speak, that is also in opposition to God**. We need to note that everything in opposition to God will be destroyed. The Mother of Harlots (false worship) is destroyed in chapter 17 by the kings of the earth, by man. Here, Babylon is destroyed by God.

THE QUESTION OF LITERAL VS. SYMBOLIC

In any interpretation of God’s Word the question always comes down to “is this literal, or is it symbolic?” The best rule of thumb in any interpretation, in order to fully understand God’s Word, is to take whatever is said as literally as possible, and if something does not make literal sense, look for the symbolic meanings. In many cases it is both. This should also be explored. The question here in this chapter then, is **“does chapter 18 (and chapter 17) refer to the actual physical city of Babylon, or is it just symbolic of religions and commercial systems in opposition to God?”** This has caused a great deal of controversy and many differences of opinions. Some say it is only symbolic, and some say it is the actual city. And, some say both. We agree with this latter opinion.



The destruction (complete annihilation) of Babylon (the physical and the spiritual city) is prophesied in the six classic chapters that deal with this subject: Isaiah 13 and 14, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Revelation 17 and 18, as well as many other prophetic passages throughout scripture. The Bible says the “ruins” will never be inhabited. So far, that has not yet happened. Although the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Persians in 539 BC (literally it fell), it has never been totally destroyed. None of the subsequent world powers destroyed Babylon. It was a great and valuable city to have in one’s kingdom. Alexander the Great made his home there, and died there (two kingdoms after the Babylon Empire). We should not confuse the FALL of Babylon with the DESTRUCTION of Babylon. We believe God will fulfill His prophecies in this regard TO THE LETTER.

Babylon today has been partially rebuilt, including the actual Tower of Babel and portions of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace (including the dining hall where Daniel 5, the handwriting on the wall, took place). Saddam Hussein spent millions on this renovation, picturing himself as the newest Nebuchadnezzar. Even though he is no longer in the picture, the world has taken an interest in rebuilding Babylon as a world class tourist center.

Zechariah 5:5-11 gives us a strange prophecy concerning Babylon. Like John, Zechariah is given a series of visions regarding the future. Perhaps one of the strangest is here:

⁵Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, "Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth."⁶So I asked, "What is it?" And he said, "It is a basket that is going forth." He also said, "This is their resemblance throughout the earth:⁷Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket";⁸then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.⁹Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven.¹⁰So I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they carrying the basket?"¹¹And he said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base."



Without going into a verse-by-verse study of this passage, we understand that **the "Land of Shinar" is a reference to Babylon**. There is another interesting woman in a basket. The harlot in chapter 17 is related to Babylon as well, and she is false worship. Here in Zechariah 5, this woman's name is wickedness (she may be the same one as the harlot in Revelation 17). She is kept in a basket for a time, and in the end of time she will be taken where a house is built for her in Babylon. Because of these verses, some speculate that Babylon, the literal city, will be rebuilt, and will then be used as the headquarters for the final world government and the final world leader. Some even think that there will be a return to Babylon as head of religious power as well. This would make sense if the antichrist is headquartered here, as he desires worship of himself alone. If this is the case, wickedness will migrate back to its original place of rebellion: Bab-el. This is where all wickedness, opposition to God, is portrayed in scripture, where it began and where it will be judged. **There are many other scriptural references that lead us to believe that a literal physical city of Babylon will be rebuilt and will become instrumental in eschatological prophecy, end time events. The fall of the city of Babylon, the physical city, may also be implied in these passages.**

In regard to its symbolic meaning, **chapters 17 and 18 represent ALL the ways that mankind opposes God**. We oppose Him by worshipping what WE want, rather than what HE wants and in our own way, rather than His Way. We make up lies to pass for truths and thus corrupt our worship. This is an abomination to Him, and is represented by the harlot of chapter 17. As far as everything else, we live **lives that are in opposition to him. This includes how we do business, how we relate to each other, what we (the world) exalts and holds in high esteem. This is represented by the doom of "commercial Babylon" in chapter 18**. All wickedness (the woman in the basket in chapter 5 of Zechariah) is destroyed here. Wickedness in worship and wickedness in secular life.

It doesn't take much imagination to look around and see wickedness is what rules this world, both in the "spiritual" and the "physical." These two chapters indicate it will all be destroyed. What this world holds near and dear will be gone, replaced by Truth. **OPPOSITION TO GOD, in any form, WILL BE DESTROYED.** It will include both the physical city of Babylon as it is now, or as it is rebuilt later, and all that it represents symbolically.

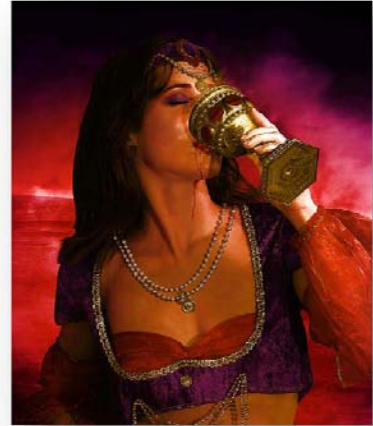
¹ *After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.* ² *And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"*

- *"After these things..."* After what things? This chapter immediately follows the destruction of the harlot, or false worship systems (the final days apostate church). It would appear that the false religious system is destroyed before the rest of wickedness, or what is referred to in this chapter as the economic/commercial system in opposition to God. Together, these two equal man's complete opposition to good and right, to God Himself.
- Just like in chapter 14, a great angel with great authority (perhaps one of the "angels of the Presence" since the earth is *"illuminated with his glory"*) announces that Babylon is doomed. The over 300 references to Babylon in scripture are of its wickedness and its ultimate destruction. All of these prophecies are now being fulfilled. It is called "Babylon the great" because the world in opposition to God has made it great. Instead of God being great, the world has exalted wickedness to a place of greatness.
- *"And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,"...* Perhaps the loudness of this voice is to proclaim to the entire world that wickedness is judged, finally. The entire world may hear this proclamation. The phrase "is fallen, is fallen..." is offered two times, as it is in chapter 14, and also in Isaiah 21:9. This is an underscore, a way of saying to the world, "make no mistake here. All wickedness will be judged and destroyed." As you read these words she may still be thriving, but in God's timeline, it has already happened. She IS fallen.
- *and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"* Notice the reference to unclean birds. We saw two of these in Zechariah 5, the ones who lifted the basket with the woman. Unclean birds have often been related to demonic activity. It seems that Babylon has become a place of every type and kind of wickedness, evil and "foul spirit." This may be both literal and symbolic. And, it may indicate, at least spiritually, that perhaps all evil is contained here and it may become a jail or prison of sorts for evil spirits in the Millennium. (See Isaiah 13:19-22)



³ *For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”*

- The case against “Babylon the Great” is building here. The Harlot of chapter 17 was presented as false worship, the apostate church, and all religious beliefs and activities outside of the truth of God’s Word. In chapter 17 we saw that the kings of the earth were said to have *“committed fornication with her.”* This is repeated here in chapter 18, but one more element is added to those who have aligned themselves with her: *“the merchants of the earth.”* This is representative of economies, business, commerce. The way the world works in general.
- The *“kings of the earth”* represent the political aspect of cultures and the *“merchants of the earth”* represent the commercial and economic aspects of cultures. Together they have joined themselves to false worship because it benefits them. They have grown rich. This is an indication that governments, false worship systems and commerce have joined forces to become rich, all in opposition to God’s truth. Man’s history is full of such alignments of church, state and commerce, all for the purpose of growing rich. Mankind is drunk on this quest for power and riches.
- *“...all the nations...”* is pretty clear. No one exempt. All governments, all leaders, kings and political entities have embraced this harlot and strayed from the truth.
- *“have drunk...”* The verb tense here includes all the past, and the present.
- The focus of **chapter 17 was the alignment of governments with the harlot**. The focus of chapter 18 is the **alignment of commerce with the harlot**. There is a trio here, all joined together for one purpose: wealth. This trio of worship, government and commerce pretty much represents total opposition to God. The first organized church has been “in bed with” (as we are fond of saying, and as it truly applies here to the harlot picture) government and commerce from its beginning in the 3rd century AD.
- This is a good place to provide a **commentary regarding this commercial aspect of the harlot** and opposition to God. William R. Newell wrote an excellent commentary on the book of Revelation. It is startling how appropriate his comments then are now. Here is a condensed version of what he wrote regarding commerce and this chapter 18 of Revelation (keep in mind this was written in 1935!)



“THE CHARACTER OF COMMERCE: 1. It is not of God – especially world commerce, but is of man and of Satan. 2. God placed His nation, Israel, in a land where commerce with other nations was very nearly impossible. It had no harbors. On the East and South were deserts; at the North, mountains with only a narrow “entering in.” Jehovah expressly forbade the multiplying of horses, and also of silver and gold (Deuteronomy 17:16-17)...5. International commerce; a) Enables man to avoid as far as possible God’s command to till the earth and to live by the sweat of his brow. b) Tends to unify the humanity that God has definitely divided into nations, for the very purpose of covering the earth with the spirit of self-confidence and rebellion as before Babel (Genesis 11). c) enables individuals, cities and nations to become unduly swollen with riches. It begets universal covetousness, which is idolatry – in that the man who has money can be independent of God.

Govett well says: ‘The opposition to the spirit of commerce which the Book of God shows, is very remarkable, especially as running in direct contrast to the avowed plans of rulers and peoples of our day. ‘Cherish COMMERCE’ is one of the great admitted ends of statesmanship. But its effects upon the mind are generally productive of covetousness.” 6. The nature of commerce is very simple. You take your products (generally by ships, where you can get the highest price; fill your ship there and again sail where you get the high price, and again load your ship at a low cost with wares desirable in other countries, and so on and on. Now this is not tilling the ground and living quietly. God hates it and will destroy it utterly. What God wants, is that each man live beneath “his own vine and fig-tree,” “content with such things” as he has. “Big Business” is an abomination. It will be the ruination of the world. 7. “Business” is an excuse most common in the thoughts of men for not serving God (and yet shortly they will stand before God!) Millions of men really think that “business” has a real claim upon them. 8. We see the wickedness of the spirit of commercialism both from the fearful power exercised by the Beast of Revelation 13, forbidding either selling or buying without “his mark” stamped upon the hand or upon the forehead, and also from chapter 18 of Revelation. It is atheistic; it is self-indulgent; it is self-confident: “I sit a queen.” 9. The difficulties experienced by God’s dear saints of all days on account of “business” claims is proverbial. The spirit of commercialism, which has seized upon the human race, is fast blotting out real human ties (home, church or country). We scarcely know how far we have drifted. Our forefathers were content with their living. They had domestic ties, “family reunions,” quiet church affiliations, gladly worshipping in the same old church, generation after generation. They had deep, kind, loving patriotism. But the forgetting of God is fast falling upon earth under the soul-stifling power of universal greed. Such delusive catch words as “a higher standard of living” have poisoned the streams of the life of the world....Everybody wants to be rich – which damns its tens of millions!....10. Commercialism brings spiritual deadness and insensibility as nothing else does. Once consent in your heart that “business” has a claim upon you and your spiritual life begins to shrivel. For a man to do an honest day’s work is not to yield to the claims that “business” makes upon humanity. God told us to work, to work with our hands, to do with our might what our hands find to do, to do the humblest tasks, even those of a slave, as unto the Lord. The thing called “business” has to be discerned distinctly by you if you are to understand the hideousness into which the whole world will leap, and alas, how shortly! “Depression” is, I have no doubt, as answer to prayer, as was the famine in Ahab’s idolatrous days an answer to Elijah’s prayers. Civilization goes mad to get rich – anything to get rich! Now this simply means anything to gain independence of God. The Lord Jesus said, “Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

(William R. Newell, “Revelation: Chapter-By-Chapter, A Classic Devotional Commentary,” originally published 1935.) So do you agree with this analysis of commerce?

- And here is another worth reading at this point in our study. This is by August Seiss, written in 1865:

“In what indeed, does the mightiest and farthest reaching power on earth now already center? A power which looms up in all lands, far above all individual or combined powers of church, or state, or caste, or creed? What is it that today monopolizes nearly all legislation, dictates international treaties, governs the conferences of kings for the regulation of the balance of power, builds railways, cuts ship canals, sends forth steamer lines to the ends of the earth, unwinds electric wires across continents, under the seas and around the world, employs thousands of engineers, subsidizes the press, tells the state of the markets of the world yesterday that everyone may know how to move today, and has

her living organizations in every land and city, interlinked with each other, and coming daily into closer and closer combination, so that no great government under the sun can any longer move or act against her will, or without her concurrence and consent? Think for a moment, for there is such a power; a power that is everywhere clamoring for a common code, a common currency, a common weights and measures, and which is not likely to be silenced or to stop till it has secured a common center on its own independent basis, whence to dictate to all countries and to exercise its own peculiar rule on all the kings and nations of the earth. That power is COMMERCE; the power of the ephah and the talent – the power borne by the winged women of Zechariah 5; the one with her hand on the sea and the other with her hand on the land – the power which even in its present dismemberment is mightier than any pope, any throne, any government, of any other one human power on the face of the globe. Let it go on as it has been going, and will go, in spite of everything that earth can interpose to hinder, dissolving every tie of nationality, every bond of family or kindred, every principle or right and religion which it cannot bend and render subservient to its own ends and interests; and the time must come when it will settle itself down somewhere on its own independent base, and where Judaism and heathenism, Romanism and Protestantism, Mohommedanism and Buddhism, and every distinction of nationality – English, German, French, Italian, Greek, Turk, Hindu, Arab, Chinese, Japanese, or what not – shall be sunk in one great universal fellowship and kingdom of commerce!”

This commentary was written over 140 years ago! (70 years before the one by Newell). These are sobering. It would appear that the condition of Commerce today has fulfilled, and is fulfilling, this prediction made more than a century earlier. We believe both of these commentaries are accurate in their portrayal of commerce, as it relates to Revelation chapter 18. This is not how God designed His people to live.

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

- *“Come out of her, my people,...”* This must be God’s voice, as He says “my” people. This call is a consistent theme throughout scripture, and here it is the final call to come out of Babylon. This may or may not be a literal Babylon, although it is possible it is a call to literally get out of the physical city of Babylon at this point in the tribulation because of coming judgment. However, throughout scripture it is a call to God’s people to be separate from the world’s ways of doing things. As this chapter is concerned with commerce and big business, God’s people are called OUT of this worldly system, or at the least called to do business in a much different way than the world. We are not to think or act like the world. We have a different standard, and we are not to have the same worldly behaviors or lusts. We are not to get caught up in the frenzy of commerce and business. (See 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, Isaiah 52:11, James 1:27, Mark 4:15-20, Luke 8:14, 1 John 2:15-17)
- There are actually **seven instances in scripture where God’s people are commanded to specifically come out of Babylon**: Isaiah 48:20, Isaiah 52:11, Jeremiah 50:8-9, Jeremiah 51:6-8; Zechariah 2:6-7, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, and here in Revelation 18:4.
- This is a call for God’s people to remove themselves from the world system in order to live differently, as well as escape the coming judgment of Babylon, and all she represents. Another commentator said it well:

“[this is] not necessarily a coming out at a particular moment, or out of a particular place, but an aloofness of spirit maintained in the very heart of the world’s traffic.” (Swete)

- **“...lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.”** This is a clear warning to God’s people. You cannot remain “in Babylon” (in the world’s system, in opposition to God) and be saved. If you remain in her, you will share her sins. If you share her sins, you will share her judgment (plagues). This is just as true today as it was when first written. Perhaps even more so, as the lure of the world is stronger in many ways, and commerce and business is the way of the world.
- **“For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”** A reference to the first world opposition to God, the Tower of Babel, which is currently being reconstructed in a spiritual sense. The world attempts to “reach heaven” on its own, without God. Now the only thing reaching heaven is the world’s sin. It is also interesting to note that God remembers these sins, yet forgets the sins of believers.

⁶ Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. ⁷ In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’

- **We don’t know specifically to whom this is addressed.** Could be to the Angels of the Presence who will be pouring out these plagues of judgment, or could just be a general statement that the whore of the earth deserves what she gets. This is a reminder that God’s judgment is fair, and the impending doom of Babylon and the world’s system against God is a fulfillment of prophecy (read Psalm 137, etc.) The whore will receive exactly what she deserves for taking the hearts of God’s people, and for acting in rebellion toward Him. She has placed wealth and power above God. Now she will receive torment and sorrow.
- **“...for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’”** This seems to be the attitude today. Each person caught up in this tangled web of commerce, politics and false religion is arrogant, thinking no one can touch him or her, and they will not pay for this way of life. The Greeks had a name for this sinful attitude: “HUBRIS” (also in French), which is an arrogance that comes to feel that it is self-sufficient, all powerful, with no need of God. The phrase **“sit as queen”** and **“no widow”** may be a reference to her as the “queen of heaven” which is a growing cult these days, honored by many religions, including Christianity. (Note: A widow in Old Testament scripture was not a virgin, and hence was not a suitable or acceptable bride for a priest (Leviticus 22:13).)

⁸ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

- This verse was quoted often following the tragic events of September 11, 2001 in New York City. The collapse of the twin trade towers within one hour (see verse 17) made these passages a bit scary and uncanny to some. The World Trade Center represented the world’s financial and commercial systems, and for that reason many believe these verses in chapter 18 were fulfilled at that time. However, the phrase **“will come in one day”** merely means it will come suddenly, and it will be catastrophic, not over time. This may or may not be a literal time reference.

- Note also that it says “*she will be utterly burned with fire...*” Obviously the world’s financial system suffered a blow, but has continued to thrive, perhaps even stronger than before 911. The events of that day may have been a pre-cursor, a coming attraction, but were not complete fulfillment of these verses. The final total and complete destruction of Babylon, as a physical place and as a spiritual entity and way of living, will be completely fulfilled by God.
- In previous chapters John has identified Babylon as Rome. Many scholars think these two cities are really interchangeable, at least in a spiritual sense. One commentator says: “**In the time when John was writing a kind of insanity of wanton extravagance to which it is very difficult to find any parallel in history had invaded Rome.**” The same arrogance and extravagance is here today. Some have even said the United States is Babylon. **Ultimately Babylon is every city, every person, every system that stands in opposition to God.** And as such, it, they, will be utterly destroyed. Every nation on earth should note the 5 reasons why the mighty Roman Empire fell, according to Edward Gibbon, author of “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:” (*these should sound shockingly familiar to us*)
 - 1) Undermining the sanctity of the home as the foundation for human society.
 - 2) Ever increasing taxes, spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the people
 - 3) Madness for pleasure, increasing violence of sports, extravagances, lusts, increasing immorality
 - 4) Armaments and military build-up, when real enemy was within (including decay of individual responsibility)
 - 5) Decay of worship, faith leading to form (ritual), losing touch with reality, no power to guide the people

⁹ “*The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,* ¹⁰ *standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’* ¹¹ “*And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:* ¹² *merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;* ¹³ *and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.* ¹⁴ *The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.* ¹⁵ *The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,* ¹⁶ *and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!’* ¹⁷ *For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’* *Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance* ¹⁸ *and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’* ¹⁹ “*They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘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.’*”

- This entire passage (verse 9 through verse 18) should initially be read together to understand the basic message. There are three groups singled out here, just as they have been throughout chapters 17 and 18: the “*kings of the earth,*” and “*the merchants of the earth,*” and then “*every shipmaster, all who travel by ship...*” These three groups represent government and commerce that has joined with false religion to gain power and wealth.

- The **shipmasters and sailors are those who moved the goods** and are also in allegiance with the harlot, the kings and the merchants. This is about spiritual adultery, a heart against God. Now all these groups see that their extravagant and rebellious way of life is gone, totally destroyed. They weep and lament her passing, but only because it means their loss of power and wealth.
- **“standing at a distance for fear of her torment...”** These people and systems are standing back because they fear the same judgment. They have good reason to fear. Government and politics lament over her loss, because it means their loss. The merchants lament over her loss, because it means an end to their wealth.



COMMENTARY: In that day Babylon will dominate and rule the world. The capital of Antichrist will be Babylon, and he will have the first total dictatorship. The world will become an awful place. In that day everything will

center in Babylon. ...Everything in that city will be in rebellion against almighty God, and it centers in Antichrist. No one dreamed that this great city would be judged. Yet by the time the sun goes down, Babylon is nothing but smoldering ruins. When the news goes out, the world is stunned, and then begins the wail. The whole world will howl when Babylon goes down. ...In chapter 17 we saw that the kings of the earth hated religious Babylon and that Antichrist got rid of it in order that he might be worshiped without any competition.... And the kings of the earth joined in her destruction. In contrast to this, here in chapter 18 we see that the kings of the earth love commercial Babylon because of the revenue she brought to their coffers. In fact, it is called here fornication—you can't find a better word for it than that! All the lobbyists were in Babylon, not Washington, D.C. They were representing all the great corporations in the world. But the kings desert Babylon like rats leaving a sinking ship; their mourning is both pathetic and contemptible. They eulogize her with panegyrics of praise, but there is a hopelessness in their anguish. They marvel at the sudden destruction of that which they thought was gilt-edged security. The judgment came in the space of one hour, reminding us of the sudden devastation caused by atomic explosions. This is a frightful picture presented to us, and it is the final conflagration and catastrophic judgment that will bring Christ to the earth to set up His Kingdom. (McGee)

- Three times we are told that Babylon's demise happens *in “one hour.”* (v. 10, v. 17, v. 20) This may or may not be literal, but the fact that it appears three times is to underscore how quickly and suddenly this happens. No one expects it. And immediately following each of these statements we see that the destruction is complete, and Babylon is desolate (riches come to nothing).
- **“...for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of...”** beginning in verse 11 and continuing through verse 13 we find a long list of “merchandise” that is traded around the world. This is a list of 28 different cargoes (4 X 7). These are both literal and symbolic. These things represent all the commerce, all the riches, and all the material goods that man lusts for. (Note that the number “4” represents the earth [four corners, four winds, etc.] and “7” is perfectly complete. This list is intended to be a complete list of all the world's “goods and services.”)

- This long list also **includes items from every material list: mineral, plant, animal and human.** It includes everything of any material value. It also includes and represents luxuries as well as necessities. Notice this list also includes human cargo: “...*bodies and souls of men.*” These may represent both physical slaves (in Rome a third of the population were slaves and they were traded as a commodity like anything else), as well as addictions (slaves to substances), and souls that have been sold out to the enemy. This list represents everything that can be bought and sold for profit. There is a similar list of goods in Ezekiel 27, which is a lament for Tyre, a well-known sinful commercial center of the ancient world.
- “*They threw dust on their heads...*” an ancient symbol of mourning found throughout scripture.
- Notice that **this lament is repeated 3 times.** This is intended to underscore the significance of: 1) its ENTIRE destruction, all sinful wealth and the power seeking world 2) the great, complete and fierce judgment Babylon receives (very serious, very solemn, very terrible) 3) the finality of this judgment and destruction, and 4) the suddenness of this destruction.
- A summary of these “mourners” could be found in **Romans 1:18-32.** It’s worth reading here.

²⁰ *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”*

- A **command to rejoice in the middle of this destruction and chaos.** Who is this directed to? The holy apostles and prophets, who prophesied of this destruction, who suffered greatly, and often gave their lives, because of this evil which is now judged. We also recall the souls under the altar in chapter 6 who cried out “how long?” God says, NOW. Now is the time of His judgment and restoration. It is indeed time to rejoice.
- A **true believer will be in distress at the immoral conduct around us in the world.** It should cause us to weep and mourn and lament. But when it is judgment, it is time to rejoice. It is just the opposite for the world. They lived high and mighty rejoicing in their wealth and power and sin. Now they weep... as believers rejoice. We celebrate the end of apostasy, idolatry, materialism, hedonism, humanism, or any other kind of “ism” that exalts itself against God. The end of the sinful world means freedom from corruption, a true reason for rejoicing. All sin must be destroyed before we can enter into God’s perfect world for us. Jeremiah 51 predicts such rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon.
- The first group listed to rejoice is “*O heaven...*” This would include all the saints who now reside in heaven, as well as all the heavenly spiritual forces (angels) that serve God.
- The two groups of **apostles and prophets** may be deliberate to represent the New Testament Church (apostles, disciples, saints) and Old Testament prophets, or the combined Church.

²¹ *Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.*

- This verse is a strong visual aid to the reader. It is intended to completely underscore and emphasize this chapter. Most of us don’t realize how large a millstone is. They were used for milling grains, and could be as large as six feet in diameter, or even bigger, hewn of solid stone. If such a stone were thrown into the sea, it would disappear almost immediately.

- The angel here is demonstrating just **how fast, how complete, how violent and how permanent will be the end of Babylon.**



²² The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. ²³ The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

- Again, these verses are intended to show the finality and complete destruction of this way of life that is in opposition to God. The phrase ***"shall not be found,...shall not be heard, ...shall not shine, e.g.,"*** is repeated 7 times in this section for emphasis (*perfectly complete 7. This list of things is complete, and encompasses all the typical sounds and sights of the world's endeavors.*) There will be no workers, no daily life sounds (millstone, grinding, etc.), no business, no industry, no night life, no light, period. No evidence of any kind of life (marriage, etc.) These are final touches, if you weren't quite convinced, of the ultimate, complete and permanent destruction of this world system apart from God. Come out of her! Now!
- It is very interesting to note the phrase ***"For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived."*** The earth exalted commerce, and men of commerce (business) as the great men of the earth. Who today are our world's heroes? Business icons, sports icons, television personalities. These are for the most part corrupt, openly sinful and immoral, yet the world considers them "the great men of the earth." This indicates what and who the world places its value in.
- The word for **"sorcery" here again is the Greek "pharmakeia"** which may indicate drugs, delusions, addictions, etc. Many of the cults and false religions put an emphasis on "experiences" in false worship, and drugs are often a part of this. It is through this sorcery and trickery that all nations have been deceived and hearts stolen.
- There are **3 reasons presented here for the judgment of "Babylon:"** 1) Commerce, the pursuit of wealth and power, etc. being most important in life, more important than God, and therefore considered idolatry, punishable in the Old Testament by stoning; 2) all nations, peoples have been deceived into this pursuit, away from God; 3) through the pursuit of power and wealth, the nations have killed, persecution and otherwise mistreated those who loved and served God through all ages.
- More than just marking the end of Babylon, or predicting its demise and judgment, **this passage carries a BIG message to all readers, to all people everywhere through the ages.** The message is ***"come out of her, my people."*** Come out of Babylon. Come out of the world system. ***"The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*** These words of this author in another of his letters (1 John 2:17) should get our attention.

- Throughout scripture **all believers are called out of the world**, but how easy it is to get sucked back into that vortex of self and lust and temptation. One commentator (Dunnet) said **“God’s people must wear lightly the things of the world, so that they will be enabled to leave them when the call is given.”** Good advice. Life saving advice. This call of God may be to each of us individually at any given moment. It may not just apply to the city of Babylon, or the representative symbolic system in opposition to God. It first applies to our lives, our relationship with Him, at anytime. Come out of her, my people. These words should ring in our ears.
- The chapter **marks the end of the three sets of judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls)**. Now the big event we all await comes next in chapter 19. The glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus.

(If you are interested in reading more about the harlot, the kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth, we recommend: “A Woman Rides the Beast” by Dave Hunt, “The Two Babylons, or The Papal Worship” by Alexander Hislop.)

