



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 18

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Introduction

- In this chapter we find the fall of Babylon the great proclaimed and the great mourning over her by those in the world
- The laments in this chapter over the destruction of the city know symbolically as "Babylon" should also remind us of Jesus' lament when He shed tears over the city of Jerusalem when He first caught sight of her as He rode into the city on Palm Sunday of Passion week, Luke 19:41-44, 13:34-35; & Matthew 23:37-39



Introduction

Chapter Outline

- Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon (1- 8)
- The World Mourns Babylon's Fall:
 - a) The Kings of the Earth (9-10)
 - b) The Merchants of the Earth (11-16)
 - c) The Mediators (17-20)
- Finality of Babylon's Fall (21-24)

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- *After these things* , After the angel had so far explained the meaning of the vision, and mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns which carried her
- The "mystery" of the beast and the harlot having been declared, the angel now describes the doom in store for them
- *another angel* , Different from the one that had last appeared, and therefore coming to make a new communication to him

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- It is not unusual in this book that different communications should be entrusted to different angels, Revelation 14:6,8-9,15,17-18
- John makes three statements about this messenger
 1. He comes *from heaven*
 2. *great authority* is given to him
 3. The earth shines with his glory

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- *coming down from heaven*, The angel is from heaven, as carrying the news of the judgment which is sent from heaven, Revelation 10:1, 19:6,15,17, 15:1, etc.
- *having great authority*, That is, he was probably one of the higher rank or order of angels
- *the earth was illuminated with his glory*, The usual representation respecting the heavenly beings, Exodus 24:16; Matthew 17:2; Luke 2:9; Acts 9:3

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- This would, of course, add greatly to the magnificence of the scene
- The light which shines from the heavenly messenger shines like day upon the fake splendor of Babylon, and shows that what was admired was nothing but worthless and corrupt
- This description of the messenger's glory is a near repetition of the prophet Ezekiel's description of another heavenly messenger in Ezekiel 43:2, *"and the earth shone with his glory."*

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- This *loud voice* is characteristic of the heavenly utterances, Revelation 7:2, 14:7
- *Babylon the great is fallen*, It is not only certain for destruction but that destruction is announced as already completed
- The event, though future, is described as past, being predetermined in the counsels of God
- The description in this verse is drawn largely from Isaiah 13:21-22

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- He presents to us a painful picture of that arrogant city and of what has become of her, as she became a ruin in which no human resides
- It is a picture of desolation and degradation
- This is a prophetic picture of absolute desolation where the proud achievements of man become the demonic haunts of unclean and horrible creatures
- No clean spirit would accept it, but becomes a prison for every foul spirit and every unclean and hated bird

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- Babylon's sin is not only idolatry (referred to with the term *fornication*), but also pride, greed and wealth
- The contrast is that instead of being the dwelling of the Presence of God, the city has now become *a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!*
- Portraying the destruction of a symbolic city, he describes God's judgment on the great satanic system of evil that has corrupted the earth

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- In verse 2 the messenger characterized the city's sins in 3 statements
- Now he states 3 reasons for her destruction, which repeat Rev. 14:8
- She has been a harlot Bride by prostituting herself with
1) nations, 2) kings and 3) merchants
- She has been an enemy to mankind viewed in three great aspects: nations, kings, and merchants

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- She has brought illusion upon nations
- She has reduced kings
- She has bribed merchants
- Her sins are strong sins; with both hands earnestly has she sinned
- The significance of 3 reasons is that 3 means fullness or completion

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- She has not only herself committed idolatry, but allured others to it, teaching them to break the commandments of God
- She has influenced princes to establish, and grow, and to sustain, and maintain it
- And all sorts of men have been bewitched by her, growing rich by her abundance, and being drenched in her luxury

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- After God had revealed the end of the wicked by one way or another, He began to warn His people not to participate with them in their evil
- *I heard another voice from heaven* , The voice is not said to be that of another angel
- It is not necessary to say whose voice it is; that it is a voice of divine love giving warning is enough

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



Come out bears two meanings:

- 1) Spiritual withdrawal, i.e. rejection of their principles and behaviors under any circumstance

Thus God says, *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."*

John 17:15

It is rather the warning which is so needful in every corrupt state of society, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; to practice that separation from the spirit of the world which is essential lest we should be entangled in the net of its sinful habits

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- 2) This duty of separation may sometimes lead to a **literal exodus**; in the same manner as the two prophets will ask the Church in the world to escape to the mountains and wilderness, that the weak might not collide with, and stumble over the Antichrist and his followers

The danger lies in attachment to the world-spirit, *“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.”* 1 John 2:15

The warning is focused towards saints who are in the position Lot was in, while living in Sodom, Genesis 19

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



There are parallel warnings:

- In Jeremiah 51:6; *“Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance; He shall recompense her.”*
- And Jeremiah 51:45, *“My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the LORD”*
- And Zechariah 2:6-7 *“Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,” says the LORD; “for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,” says the LORD. 7 “Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.”*

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- What about you?
- Have you heard God's call and have you been "called out" and set apart by Him from this world?
- Where does your allegiance, loyalty, and faithfulness lie?
- If we do not hear the call and remain trapped in the sins and seductions of this world what is the price we will pay?

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- *her sins have reached to heaven*, That is, the accumulation of sin is so great as to reach up to heaven
- Exactly the description of the judgment of Babylon given in Jeremiah 51:9, *"Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies."*
- The idea is of a great heap firmly secured, and towering, like another Babel, as far as heaven
- Sometimes the oppressed have thought that God had forgotten the voice of the enemy, Psalm 74:10-23; but the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, 2 Peter 3:8-18

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- The same voice which calls the people of God come forth, commands the agents of revenge
- It is not the saints, or those who have suffered from her, that are called to repay her,
- Many Old Testament parallels will suggest themselves,
- Isaiah 40:2, *“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD’s hand Double for all her sins.”*

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- Jeremiah 51:18, *"They are futile, a work of errors; In the time of their punishment they shall perish"*
- Psalm 137:8, *"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!"*
- Psalm 79:12, *"And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom Their reproach with which they have reproached You, O Lord."*
- The "double" must not be taken to mean double her sins

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- She is double-stained in wickedness, and the law of retribution fiercely works in her
- The cup of her luxuriousness becomes the cup of revenge, Revelation 14:8, 17:4, 18:3
- The flowery path has led to the broad gate and the great fire
- The cup which she has filled is that containing “*the wine of her fornication*”, verse 3
- She is now to receive a double measure of the cup of God's wrath

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- Verse 7 presents a three-fold sin
- First, self-indulgence *lived luxuriously*
- Second, pride, glorified herself ... *sit as a queen*, as if no one can remove her, total stability
- Third, avoidance of suffering *am no widow, and will not see sorrow*
- All these things are characteristic of worldliness and materialism
- The Church Fathers perceived that and experienced it
- St. Augustine experienced live before and after repentance

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- He says, [Yes... every time I keep away from You I fall in privation and corruption. How miserable am I. I never realized that my richness is in You, I, the non-existent.]
- He also says, [You who is the Way, the Truth and the Life... You who disperses darkness, evil, deviation from the truth and death. You are the Light without which, everyone lives in deep darkness. You are the Way without which, we are but lead to deviation. You are the Truth without which, death will devour all.]

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- *am*, recalls God's holy covenant name Yahweh, "I am who I am."
- The Harlot city has in effect committed the sin of Eve who committed fornication with the Serpent in seeking to make herself equal with God in Genesis 3:5
- When she says, "*I am*" she contradicts the declaration of the One True God: "*I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior*" Isaiah 43:11
- In the same way she glorifies herself, the Lord abandons her, thus she goes back to deathlike state, grief, hunger and corruption

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- God is reassuring and reminding the faithful of His almighty power
- The destruction of Babylon will come suddenly, and with completeness
- God, the mighty God, has passed sentence
- She thought herself strong; she forgot the strength of the Almighty
- Her plagues are four-fold, as though from every quarter her trouble came

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- *Death*, the announcement of her destruction with all her followers
- *mourning*, for her excessive pleasure
- *famine*, for her abundance
- And *fire*, the punishment of her fornication, Leviticus 20:14, 21:9
- The series of contrasts in Isaiah 3:24-26

Proclaiming the Fall of Babylon

18:1-8



- Some writers see here an allusion to the second, third, and fourth seals, Revelation 6
- Some think that *death* here represents the end of the world where evil will suffer eternal *mourning*, *famine* to rest, and *burned* in eternal fire



The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Kings of the Earth 18:9-10

- *The kings of the earth*, denote those who are full of pride and were given authority, power, and influence by the evil one
- It is a metaphoric symbolic picture
- For in fact, on the same day of the destruction of Babylon, those who lived in her luxury will perish with her
- Here he portrays in what state they will be
- They thought she was strong and well-established, and suddenly it fell in one hour



The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Kings of the Earth 18:9-10

- She too depended on them
- She attracted them by her pleasures and sensuality, to conquer and victor through them
- Yet, now they stand powerless and without authority, like frustrated children
- Both depended on each other, and both fell together, for a blind cannot lead a blind; both will fall in a ditch
- The time of judgment is near, and many people will stand staring at those who deceived, and seduced them



The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Kings of the Earth 18:9-10

- As those wicked deceivers seem very weak in their eyes
- However, the deceived ones will not lament for the wicked but for themselves, because they followed them and became partners in the same painful destiny
- *standing at a distance* , May mean that there will be difference in time between her end and theirs
- Therefore, *standing at a distance* as though fearing to be involved in her ruin and at the same time watching her torture is increasing their fear on theirs
- *Alas*, means Woe

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- This group is different from the first group
- The first was deceived by lusts and desires, while those were deceived by the love of money, gold, and silver
- They became rich in this world by using evil ways and delusion
- They thought, by that they could last forever on earth, getting richer day by day
- Yet in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye their merchandise became stagnant and nobody bought it any more

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- Those also weep over themselves, lament because they came out penniless
- It is plain that the mourning is rooted in self-interest, *for no one buys their merchandise anymore*
- But as St. Augustine says, that all the commercial matters are not evil or good in themselves
- They are good for those who are good and use them well; and evil for those who are evil and misuse them
- Both the merchants and Babylon did evil, and both misused these matters

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- The book of Revelation names and itemizes the various trades that Babylon was promoting during the days of evil
- He starts with gold and ends by the human soul as a trade, giving gold more importance than the souls
- What can be more evil ?
- Personal and beauty adornment, *merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet.*
- Such was the attire of the harlot, Revelation 17:4

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- She did not use them for charity but for deception and delusion
- Luxurious furniture “*every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble*”
- Ibn-el-Assal says that the citron wood is of different kinds of precious wood like ebony, jujube and sandal
- Materials for enjoyment of food, drink and aroma as, *and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep*

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- Things for pride and glory as *horses and chariots*
- Then last of all what she considers as worthless, which is enslaving people, *and bodies and souls of men*
- The merchants lost everything
- On the day of her destruction they stand amazed, how that commerce has vanished, wondering where the buying power of the wicked had gone

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- In a spiritual way we can say that the merchants are Satan and his followers who tempt people by their products which is all the pleasures of the world
- It includes not just slaves, *bodies*, but also the *souls of men* which is a condemnation of the Great City's spiritual bondage of men's souls
- The "Great City", the "Harlot" is then instead of fulfilling God's plan to become "the mother of all mankind", had prostituted her blessings, led her children into demonic bondage and finally to destruction

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- This verse, containing a direct address to Babylon
- The fruits to which the eye of desire had looked so longingly as to a harvest of delight departed
- The desire of the wicked has perished
- And the merchandise that was available before are now gone and will never ever be available again
- Things have lost their value in the face of God's judgment
- Men will no longer find them
- On the day of her destruction they stand amazed, how that commerce has vanished, wondering where the buying power of the wicked had gone

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Merchants of the Earth 18:11-16



- The merchants stand like the kings, Revelation 18:10 afar off, because of the fear of her torment, saying, “Woe! woe! (or, alas! alas!) the great city, because in one hour so great wealth was desolated
- The words of this lamentation are parallel to the lament of the kings
- Even Babylon’s friends will stand at a distance from her fall
- Though they had been partakers with her in her sins, and in her sinful pleasures and profits, they were not willing to bear a share in her plagues

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- Since the sea represents the world, *Shipmaster* and *sailors* symbolize the mediators of evil or those who carry it from one place to another selling, promoting and marketing it
- Or, those who import new, foreign and odd sins and export them
- Christ condemned them saying, "*woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*" Matthew 18:7
- *For in one hour such great riches came to nothing*, This is given as the reason of the "*Alas, alas!*" of verse 16

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- *stood at a distance* , Like the kings (verse 10) and the merchants (verse 15), and doubtless for the same reason; to avoid being overwhelmed in the destruction of the city
- It is the outcry of those who call to mind, with pain, a glory that was great, but now is gone
- It is not to be taken as meaning “what city has suffered as she has?” but rather is it the recollection of her former splendor, “how great she was.”
- This lingering of the mind over delights now vanished is one subtle element of misery

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- The casting of dust on the head is a sign of sorrow and humiliation
- It bears relation to the sitting in the dust
- The one upon whom the sorrow had fallen sat in the dust or ashes
- The attitude expressed that he had been brought very low, even to the ground
- They were throwing dust on their heads, crying out, weeping, because what they thought was the source of their wealth and happiness, became the reason of their misery and destruction

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- Here is the answer of the question the believers have been asking God, *“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* Revelation 6:10
- The second portion of the chapter closes with this invitation to the saints to rejoice: they are called to rejoice because the law of retribution has worked on her
- Heaven, and every class of those whose citizenship has been in heaven, are invited by the heavenly voice to rejoice

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- The greedy and the worldly mourn; their minds were set upon a material glory, which has slipped away from their grasp
- The long awaited moment of justification, retribution and revenge for which the martyred tribulation believers had prayed for in chapter 6 verses 9 -10 and for which all the redeemed have hoped, that time has arrived
- These final verses picture from within the results of the collapse of the Babylonian system

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- All saintly souls, whose affections have been towards righteousness and the righteous King, can rejoice; for the wealth of holiness is imperishable. and the fall of Babylon is the removal of one vast hindrance to holiness
- It has been argued that the verse represents the Apostles to be in heaven, and from this it has been concluded that the twelve must have all died before the Apocalypse was written, and, if so, St. John was not the writer

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall: The Mediators 18:17-20



- The verse, however, has no reference whatever to the question
- It is not meant to state who have passed into heaven and who have not
- It is simply a call to all who have fought on the side of their Lord to rejoice at the removal of one of the great obstacles to the manifestation of Christ's kingdom
- Thus do all holy men, whether on earth or heaven, joy when any giant evil is swept away

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- God wants to affirm to us the certainty of her fall
- This symbolic act which the angel did, had been done before by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 51:63-64)
- And in the same manner the stone fell into the sea, also Pharaoh and his soldiers had fallen into the Red Sea (Exodus 15:10)
- Yet her fall here was proclaimed at once with a powerful push
- That is how the stubborn Babylon is thrown down into hell
- It is the fate Christ warned of as awaiting those who caused His children to fall, Matthew 18:6

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- The finality of its destruction is shown by the six fold repetition of the phrase "no more at all"
- The stone cast into the sea portrays the violence and permanence of the destruction
- The Babylonian system began in Genesis 10, and has continued uninterrupted in one form or another to the present day
- But one day it will suddenly "sink," never to return

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



The destruction was shown in:

- Removal of people infatuated with the love of amusement “*The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore*” (Isaiah 14:11; Ezekiel 26:13)
- The disappearance of craftsmen “*And no craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore.*”
- The disappearance of work necessary for life. “*And the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore*” (Jeremiah 25:10)

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- Literally everything grinds to a halt everywhere
- Babylon will be completely and so thoroughly destroyed that it will never rise again as predicted by the Old Testament prophets
- As we read in Isaiah in Chapter 13 verses 19-21, *“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ It will never be inhabited, Nor will it be settled from generation to generation; Nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there. ²¹ But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there, And wild goats will caper there.”*

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- Total darkness, “*And the light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore.*”
- Disappearance of joy and begetting children, “*and the voice of bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer*” (Jeremiah 7:34, 9:16)
- The judgment does not fall because the merchants were great: it is the sorcery of the next clause which is the true cause of her fall
- The merchants are those who traded with her, as well as those who dwelt in her

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- *by your sorcery*, We must understand her artful policy, her attractiveness, and the seductions by which she drew into the nets of her worldliness and sin the nations around
- Three final reasons are given for Babylon's judgment
- First, they use their wealth to ascent to positions of power, prominence and influence
- The abuses of the proud, arrogant rich are well documented in scripture
- James, Isaiah and Amos condemned the rich for their self aggrandizement and maltreatment of the poor

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- Second is all the nations were deceived by her sorcery
- A final reason given for Babylon's judgment is her murderous slaughter of God's people
- Her hands are defiled with blood, the blood of prophets, who had witnessed against her
- And of saints, whose holy lives were a protest against her sins, and so hateful to her; and *of all who were slain on the earth*

Finality of Babylon's Fall

18:21-24



- These two verses reveal to us that he did not mean by Babylon a certain city or a certain period, but all the stubborn who scorned the blood of the prophets and the saints and shed the blood of those who witnessed to God
- It is a talk that tends to generalize rather than to focus only on the period of the Antichrist
- This opinion is also adopted by the non-apostolic churches
- Here is concluded the pronouncement of the judgment of Babylon



Discussion

- How does Babylon's glamour differ from her misery?
- What is the warning in 18:4? What is the principle of this verse? What is a contemporary application?
- What can we learn about how God views sin?
- How had she lived, and how did she view herself (v7)? Explain the point.



Discussion

- In what sense does Babylon sell the bodies and souls of men?
- Why does this chapter close by again mentioning martyrdom?
- What do you think Babylon symbolizes or represents?
- What is one step you can take today to put things and money in proper perspective?