

Newsletter November 2018

In our October 2018 Newsletter, we completed our study of Chapter 17 of the Revelation. In that study, we saw the destruction of the institutionalized false religion of Babylon by the rulers of the secular world, whom God had motivated to do so in accordance with his divine will (cf. Re.17:17). Religious Babylon had ultimately aggrandized itself to the extent that it had become despised by those who had earlier adored and supported her. What remained after her destruction was a completely secular Babylon that worshiped only its great material wealth and power motivated and maintained by the satanic Antichrist. Although institutionalized religion had been demolished, elements of it remained to be absorbed into the satanic system of secular Babylon. The Antichrist then received worship directly, not through the intermediary of a formal man-made religion, but through a satanically- inspired fully materialized secular religion.

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Re,18:1,2).

“After these things,” refers in particular to the series of seven bowls of wrath, the seventh of which had led to the events found in chapter 17. The institutionalized religion of Babylon was utterly destroyed by the ten ruling kings who had come to hate her for interfering with their increasingly evil corrupt commercial practices. John saw another powerful angel come down out of Heaven. The Greek word for “another” is *allos* in the Greek, which means another of the same kind, but with a distinction. The fifth bowl judgment, which had plunged the earth into darkness (cf. Re.16:10), will be fully abated by the radiant brightness of this angel’s glory. With a mighty voice this angel shouted out that “Babylon is fallen.” This is the same message that John had previously heard back in Re. 14:8. We now have before us in this chapter the details of Babylon’s destruction that the previous angel had declared. Therefore, this reference to Babylon here first refers to the fall of religious Babylon, the great religious harlot that had blanketed the earth with her false teaching, but now also to the city itself.

After religious Babylon’s demise, the great commercial city of Babylon that remained had become the home of demons, the place of every loathsome spirit, and a sanctuary for every detestable human vulture that had earlier roosted within the institutionalized religion of Babylon. It may well be that all of the demons that had been previously released from the great abyss in Revelation 9:1-11 have now gathered to reside in this single city. Although Babylon, which is spoken of here, is likely the stronghold of the Antichrist and an actual physical city, its authority and influence extends over the entire earth.

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (Re,18:3).

There is a great amount of money to be made in marketing false religion. For many centuries, the rulers of the nations on earth have engaged in Babylon’s blasphemous religious activities, such that all of the peoples on earth had been seduced to drink of the intoxication of her fornication and have suffered much from the wrath of her demented persecutions. All the while, the “merchants” (Greek, *emporos* = traveling tradesmen) of the earth have become enriched by supplying this religious harlot with her material opulence.

While the *Roman Catholic Church* both past and present is a primary example of this opulence and mistreatment of true believers, we also find many additional examples of this overindulgence and abuse in some of the worlds religious structures, larger cults, and isms, in the past and today. Sadly, we also find this same desire for opulence and abuse to an increasingly greater measure within the progressively decadent churchianity of today’s apostate Protestantism. Protestant evangelicalism today is actively selling a false gospel of corrupt social works to an unsaved population in exchange for their material substance.

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Re.18:4,5).

This voice from Heaven is the voice of God Almighty, who for many past centuries has been calling out for his people not to partake of the sins of false religion but to separate themselves from it so that they need not suffer from the plagues owed to her for its evil works. False religion has dulled mankind's senses to the wisdom found in God's Truth. "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; *there is* nothing froward or perverse in them." (Pr. 8:1-8). Wisdom is not heard today, for a reverential fear and knowledge of God is the beginning of all wisdom (cf. Pr. 9:10). There is no fear of God in the hearts and minds of men as they proceed to promote their own self-worth, which can not sustain them in the hour of their death.

Soon after mankind had been judged with a great global flood, when all but eight had perished, mankind had ignorantly attempted to build a physical tower symbolizing their own false religion high enough to reach into Heaven in complete defiance of God. That effort came to naught as God dispersed them outward over the earth by confusing their common language into many tongues. Nevertheless, the unenlightened sinfulness and willful ignorance propagated by ancient Babylon over the ages reached far unto Heaven. Although Babylon's ultimate physical judgment had not been immediate, God has not forgotten her many iniquities, as is revealed in the verses of this text that follow:

"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Re.18:6,7).

We often think of a reward as something beneficial and gratifying, but that is not the meaning here. Here "reward" is translated from the Greek word *apodidōmi*, which means to recompense or to pay back in kind. The idea of paying back double is an Old Testament concept, wherein an offender must restore that which has been taken plus an additional amount equal to that which was restored.

Babylon's great religious sins had accumulated to the extent that they reached into Heaven itself (cf. 18:5). Now, Babylon must receive her just penalty, which is double that she had perpetrated upon her unwitting subjects. In exchange for her false self-glorification, she shall be severely tormented and greatly humbled. While she had once seen herself as a queen, and not in any way as a poor widow, she shall now be brought low and suffer ruin and extreme poverty and sorrow, which is double that she had given others in exchange for her once opulent lifestyle. Since Babylon has been the source of nothing but evil works, which has deceived and tormented her unwitting subjects to their continual sorrow, this is poetic justice indeed.

"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong *is* the Lord God who judgeth her" (Re.18:8).

Babylon's ultimate judgment shall come upon her quite suddenly in which she shall suffer mourning, famine and death all quite literally in one day's time. As the Kings of the earth had earlier burned the false religious institutions of Babylon with fire, so now will the great commercial city of Babylon, which had inherited its misbegotten wealth, is to be literally burned to the ground in a great raging fire sent down from Heaven at the command of the Lord God who, standing alone in Heaven, assumes His rightful place as her almighty judge.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come" (Re.18:9,10).

As the great city is destroyed, those of high position who have engaged in her criminal activities, her rank fornication with unclean things, and have shared in her opulence, will abandon her and will lament her destruction at a safe distance for fear of sharing in her great torment. Through the brilliant light from the angel that now illuminates the earth, they observe the smoke rise up out of her burning destruction from afar off and cry out in great agony, “Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.” Babylon had survived the trumpet judgments and the first six bowl judgments through demonic power and so appeared to be invincible, but now her destruction is both swift and complete. This destruction has suddenly taken place in one hour of one day, such that in Revelation 16:17, the angel who poured out the seventh bowl of God’s wrath had simply stated “it is done.”

“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more” (Re.18:11):

Likewise the traveling tradesmen who had engaged in commerce and shipping and have depended upon Babylon for their livelihood, also weep and mourn her destruction. Not that they care so much about the city itself, but because along with its destruction there is no one remaining to trade with them any longer. Their expensive merchandise suddenly becomes worthless, and the traders’ shipping and delivery enterprise will collapse, thus leaving them with a vast inventory of non-sellable merchandise.

“The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all” (Re, 18:12-14).

Here is listed an astonishing array of items that had constituted Babylon’s extreme opulence. First is listed Jewelry made of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls. Second is listed the makings of fine garments worn by its high governors made of fine linen with purple dye, and silk with scarlet dye. Third, is listed decorations made of thyine wood (Greek, *thuin* – a fragrant citrus wood). Fourth is fine eating and drinking utensils made of precious wood, brass, iron, and marble. Even exotic flavorings such as cinnamon as well as various fragrances and ointments such as frankincense that were once valued now vanish. Vast stockpiles of cooking ingredients such as wine, oil, fine flour, and wheat that had piled up are consumed by the fire of her devastation in a moment. Livestock, and “chariots” (i.e. various means of transportation) once treasured are no more.

Babylon, which had once held captive the souls of men world-wide, no longer exists. As to the extended empire of the Antichrist across the entire earth, everything that had once been valued by its reprobate citizenry had vanished along with its capital city’s fiery destruction.

“The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls” (Re.18:15,16)!

The merchants as we saw in verse 11, continue to stand at a great distance while weeping and wailing for fear that the residents’ torment will also befall them. They stand in awe of the sudden destruction of that great commercial city that had purchased and worn rich and colorful garments and decorations that they had previously sold to them as a sign of their power and secure position.

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city is* like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate” (Re,18:17-19).

Every ship's captain along with the many sailors under their command dared not even approach the city, but remained ashore afar off and cried out when they saw the smoke from the burning of their great buildings and infrastructure. They are struck by the fact that the city's great riches had in the end availed them absolutely nothing. Sailors who had once engaged in the city's corrupt immoral activities "cast dust upon their heads" in their humiliation, and there was heard a great outcry along with their weeping and wailing for the lost anticipation of their raucous shore-leaves. Their captains joined them in their dismay wailing, "alas, alas," for the loss of the city that had made them and their masters rich through their overindulgence in great material possessions.

"Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Re.18:20).

The lamentation heard on earth is in complete contrast with the joy that is heard in Heaven. The apostles and the prophets of old will spontaneously rejoice over the destruction of Babylon, as all of Heaven erupts in sounds of great positive joyousness. Truth has at last prevailed and false religion has been exposed for what it was – unmitigated evil. At last, God has avenged the persecution and martyrdom of his holy prophets who had spoken his Word on earth, and of the apostles of Christ who had sent the Golden Gospel to the ends of the earth.

"And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all (Re. 18:21)

An angel throws a huge stone into the sea that makes a great loud splash, but it immediately sinks below the waves to be seen no more. This is symbolic of Babylon that once boasted of being a great prestigious city, but is now suddenly thrown down in great violence to be seen no more buried under the waters of God's wrathful judgment.

And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" (Re.18:22-23).

Babylon was once viewed as the merriest place on the earth, but it was also a very very sinful city. It had excelled as the entertainment capitol of the world both within its great halls and upon its streets. Now with its demise, the singers, performers, flutists and trumpeters had fallen silent to be heard no more. Skilled craftsmen that had once occupied her many shops are gone, and its great mills, which had once produced fine flour and other foodstuff are silent. The bright lights that once lit her broad streets and avenues are now dark – not even the light of a single candle can be seen. No more marriage and giving in marriage, which had become but a parody of its once sacred union between a man and a woman, takes place. Family life had come to an abrupt end and with it all civil society. The aristocratic rulers of the city were the evil merchants of sin who through their demonic seduction, magic, and sorcery had deceived the entire earth to worship Satan through their wide dissemination of countless false religions.

"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Re.18:24).

This once great city of Babylon was the murderer of God's people; the blood of the saints, of the prophets, and of all other godly men that had been slain upon the earth was found in her smoldering ruins. Thus is their blood avenged inasmuch as Babylon is now dead and shall live no more. Babylon's permanent destruction now makes way for a great transformation to come about upon the earth, from a place of darkness and evil to a place of glorious light and truth. Next month in Chapter 19, we shall see the rejoicing that has taken place in Heaven at the inevitability of Babylon's destruction on earth, the wedding feast of Christ to his Church, and the glorious return of Christ to the earth with all his saints as its conquering King. © Arthur J. Smith November 2018