

BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson 39 - Chapter 18

Keep your Bibles open and handy today; we're going to be doing a lot of reading and we're also going to be doing much soul searching.

Week after week, chapter after chapter, the Book of Revelation has (through John's visions) shown us what has happened and is going to happen in the spiritual sphere in Heaven, and then the parallel events that will happen in the physical sphere on earth. What happens centers entirely on God's judgment of His Creation gone corrupt. It is important that we not only see this connection between the spiritual and the physical, but are aware of exactly the two different places (Heaven and earth) where this series of foretold events occurs.

As we ready to enter chapter 18, God has poured out the last of 21 named judgments upon the earth, the cosmos, nature and humanity. And as usual, going all the way back to Sodom in Genesis, we find that God uses a combination of supernaturally caused calamities and He influences the evil inclinations of humans to achieve the justice for the wicked that He determines. For instance, we saw that the Great Harlot of Babylon, the woman riding upon the Beast, will be defeated and destroyed not directly by God but rather through the wicked ambitions of powerful and idolatrous kings and political leaders who at one time were her allies and clients. This mirrors what happened to ancient Babylon when King Cyrus led Persia to overthrow the Babylonian Empire. And yet in other instances we read of great earthquakes, hail the size of microwave ovens, and other supernatural phenomena being inflicted directly by God's own hand. This mirrors the events of the 10 blows that God inflicted upon Egypt in order to redeem His people Israel from the hand of the wicked Pharaoh.

Revelation 18 mixes the aftermath of the 21 judgments along with some pleas from God to His people that seem to have occurred at an earlier time, probably during some of the later judgments. But what God says to His people is profound and I can only pray that those who today consider ourselves as part of His people..... whether meaning physical Israelites or those of us who have been grafted-in in a spiritual sense through our trust in Yeshua... will have not only the ears to hear but the resolve to act.

Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 18.

READ REVELATION CHAPTER 18 all

The first words we encounter are "after these things"; it is referring to John's visions (especially the previous one of chapter 17) but not necessarily the chronological order or precise sequence that the contents of these visions will happen. It is a pattern within John's visions that a subject or event will be presented to us, and then later that subject or event will be revisited and more details added.

So in this next vision John sees what he calls "another" angel coming down from Heaven. This angel had great authority, and the entire earth was lit up by this angel's splendor. It is common among commentators to declare that this angel is Christ because of his great authority and splendor; I don't at all agree with that. This was an angel, probably a very high angel even perhaps an unidentified archangel. Nonetheless there is no hint of deity for as usual this angel never speaks in the 1st person as though he is the author of the oracle he is delivering nor is he the power behind the events that have occurred. Let me say it again: this angel is delivering God's message and not his own. The message is this: it is done. The destruction of Babylon the Great is complete and permanent. Keep in mind that this is still an event that is future for us; however similar events that we could call shadows happened in the historical past. In fact the connection between shadow and the culminating event of a prophecy that has yet to play out can often be clearly seen in some of the predictions of the prophets of old.

Tzor and Sidon were often used in prophetic oracles as examples of places and peoples of unrestrained idolatry and of those who embrace the perverse world system. So let's take the time today to examine one of these examples that not only exemplifies what we are reading in Revelation 18 but clearly John patterns his narrative after it and therefore gives us some context from which to operate. Turn your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 27.

READ EZEKIEL CHAPTERS 27 AND 28 all

Notice the unambiguous connection and characteristics of ancient Tzor and future Babylon. Tzor was the commercial capital of the known world. It was rich, idolatrous, arrogant, and existed only for materialism and extravagance. Essentially it is representative of Satan's kingdom in that era. All the nations attached themselves to Tzor and hoped to ride her coattails to similar riches and glory. Tzor saw herself as god-like in her power and influence; unassailable and impervious to the woes that others suffered. But, like God will do with the future Babylon, He brought Tzor to ruin in a day. The mention of cargo and merchants who lament the fall of Tzor is simply another way of saying the world "economy" collapsed and so everything the wealthy businessmen put their faith in was crushed. God judged Tzor and He did it for the dual reasons of punishing her for her idolatry and for harassing God's people Israel. ²⁴ ***"The house of Israel will no longer have a briar pricking away at them, no longer will any of its contemptuous neighbors be a thorn to stab them*** (Ezek. 28:24 CJB).

I point this out because it is fundamental to understanding everything that Yehoveh is doing in the End Times: much of it is to protect and avenge His people Israel. Too much the Christian Church has misappropriated God's actions on behalf of Israel as though it's our own. And while some of these divine actions, no doubt, include the protection of Believers, more often than not they are for Israel's benefit.

To truly understand what is happening here in Revelation 18, we must also consult the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah had much to say about the demise of Babylon, and indeed it happened..... in the future it will happen again.... which is typical of prophecy. Open your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 51.

READ JEREMIAH CHAPTER 51 all

Notice the similarities between Jeremiah and Revelation 18 because indeed this chapter of Jeremiah is talking about both the Babylon that existed in his time and a different Babylon that will exist far into his future (and even into our future). Notice how Babylon of old is attacked by foreigners, thus what happens to Babylon is not all supernatural but rather reflects the evil nature of humans who desire personal power. Notice as well how Babylon of old was blamed for corrupting other nations just as the future Babylon is accused of the same crime. And God urges His people to flee from Babylon so that they don't become collateral damage.

So this historical pattern of the fall of ancient Babylon is brought forward into the End Times and we hear: Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great! But even more, because Babylon is essentially Satan's earthly capital then we naturally read that it's ruins will be the dwelling place of demons and a prison for unclean spirits and for unclean and hated birds. We can rather easily understand why unclean (unrighteous) spirits would live there, but what's this about birds? It is that generally speaking unclean birds are defined in the Torah as scavenger birds; birds that eat dead and decaying flesh. And since death is the most defiling thing that has existed during human history, then those who prey on the dead (scavenger birds) are said to be imprisoned in Babylon. Let me reiterate from earlier lessons that the Babylon of the future is highly unlikely to be a rebuilt Babylon of old, nor is it likely to be a city that is actually named Babylon. Rather Babylon is representative of the center of the evil world system even though there will be a grand city that will be the capital of this coming world system.

Why has Babylon fallen? Not mainly because she is evil, but rather because she has seduced many others into her idolatrous ways and thus these many others are also going to have to suffer the horrors of God's judgment. This is why Babylon is figuratively called a whore because the Hebrew thinking is that the unclean whore drags other victims into her sin and makes them unsuitable for God's Kingdom as well because her uncleanness is transmitted to her clients. I think this is good time for me to pause and make an application that we simply must consider in our modern lives if we want not to be seen by the Lord as but one of the Whore of Babylon's willing customers.

While often we read of kings and nations as being this Harlot's clients, it is understood in Hebrew thought that this includes the citizenry. So without apology I'll be blunt. The evil world system of today has turned most of God's laws upside down and those within and without the Believing community are going to pay dearly for it. What God calls evil and condemns is today often declared as good and desired. The Prosperity Doctrine in the Church is all the rage. But we are warned in the Scriptures again and again that our lust for wealth and the material must be tempered. If material things is the unrestrained goal and ambition of our lives, then we are clients of Babylon. For God, sex (and every aspect of sex and gender) is sacred. Thus not only is human sexual behavior highly limited but so is gender identification straightforward and biblically uncompromising. Homosexuality is strictly forbidden but is characteristic of Babylon. Transgender, while not directly confronted in the Bible, is out of the question because God makes it clear that whatever sex we are biologically as we exit the womb is who we are in His eyes; there is no provision to alter what He has created and ordained. To say that we believe ourselves to be the opposite sex from our own physical biology is to deny God's order and frankly in my opinion is little more than a severe psychological disorder that has become sanctioned as normal by many governments in this world.

Our treatment of those who murder innocents is plain and unambiguous in the Bible; they are to be executed. Why? First because they are wicked and wickedness must be removed from the community else it infect the rest. Second because innocent blood defiles the ground and only the blood of the guilty can remove that defilement (this is one of the Law's most basic principles). Housing murderers for life on the weak motive that perhaps 1 in 1000 has been wrongly convicted is not our prerogative. Housing them for life out of a sense of a better more merciful justice is even worse because we are openly declaring that we are right and God is wrong in His justice. Those who believe such things are clients of Babylon.

The greed of wealthy businessmen who live a lifestyle unimaginable to all but a select few, and yet so poorly pay their employees that they must struggle mightily just to put food on the table, are emblematic of the values of Babylon; and God hates it. I could go on but I've probably included sufficient examples to make the point. The Babylon of the future in many ways already exists today in spirit. And fellow Believers, we must not succumb to it no matter your political affiliation, what church you attend, how your family and friends see it, and certainly not according to immoral laws our secular government creates. If we share the same values as Babylon, we will be judged as Babylon even if we deceive ourselves into believing that we are righteous in God's eyes because we insist we follow Christ.

CJB Matthew 7:21-23 ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. ²² On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

So, what are God's chosen people to do? The next part of God's message answers that question and is spoken from an unidentified being in Heaven as verse 4 says this: "My people, come out of her!" I can only conclude that this part of the message is so critical that God Himself is delivering it since it is spoken in the 1st person. Obviously the "her" is Babylon. But who are those who God calls "My people"? Hosea addresses this exact issue.

CJB Hosea 2:1 - 3 "Nevertheless, the people of Isra'el will number as many as the grains of sand by the sea, which cannot be measured or counted; so that the time will come when, instead of being told, 'You are not my people,' it will be said to them, 'You are the children of the living God.'

² Then the people of Y'hudah and the people of Isra'el will be gathered together; they will appoint for themselves one leader; and they will go up out of the land; for that will be a great day, [the day] of Yizre'el.

³ "Say to your brothers, 'Ammi [My People]!' and to your sisters, 'Ruchamah [Pitied]!'

Paul uses Hosea to show how gentile Believers are added to those called "My People" that

originally consisted only of Hebrews.

CJB Romans 9:20-28 ²⁰ *Who are you, a mere human being, to talk back to God? Will what is formed say to him who formed it, "Why did you make me this way?"* ²¹ *Or has the potter no right to make from a given lump of clay this pot for honorable use and that one for dishonorable?*

²² *Now what if God, even though he was quite willing to demonstrate his anger and make known his power, patiently put up with people who deserved punishment and were ripe for destruction?*

²³ *What if he did this in order to make known the riches of his glory to those who are the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-²⁴ that is, to us, whom he called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?*

²⁵ *As indeed he says in Hoshea, "Those who were not my people I will call my people; her who was not loved I will call loved;"²⁶ and in the very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God!"*

²⁷ *But Yesha'yahu, referring to Isra'el, cries out, "Even if the number of people in Isra'el is as large as the number of grains of sand by the sea, only a remnant will be saved."²⁸ For ADONAI will fulfill his word on the earth with certainty and without delay."*

And even though we hear this from Hosea and through Paul, Jeremiah also echoes God's command to separate ourselves from Babylon.

CJB Jeremiah 51:6 ⁶ *Flee from Bavel, let each one save his life! Don't perish because of her guilt. For the time has come for the vengeance of ADONAI; he will repay her what she deserves.*

Why flee? So that we don't share in the sins of Babel and thus also share in their same fiery ending. It is clear: for anyone of God's people to remain beholden to Babylon is spiritual defection from the Kingdom of God. The concept is simple: there are some of God's people who are indeed part of Babylon. So the proper response of a worshipper of the God of Israel is to take heed, admit our complicit actions with Babylon, and begin an altered life. We must come to the realization that we cannot have it both ways; but then comes the moment of decision.

Now please hear me: as Believers we cannot be part of a church that protects its ministers when they commit child molestation or have adulterous affairs, or ordains homosexual ministers, or sanctions gay marriage, or promotes abortion, or says no to executing murderers according to God's justice system and then expect to be sealed and protected from God's judgment. Millions of Believers are today living a lie; walking around oblivious to their precarious situation because of a false sense of spiritual security, and are also completely closed to hearing otherwise because God's Word has given way to current political correctness and a feel-good kind of religiosity that validates our own fluctuating and fickle emotions over

God's commandments. I cannot urge you strongly enough to never darken the doors again of such a congregation or institution. You have no idea how many emails I get from people who wish to get a positive validation from me by saying that they know how wrong their congregation is but they have been a part of it for so very long and so are going to be a trooper and stay and try to change it. Admirable sounding, but naive and disobedient. Nowhere do we read of God saying to His people who live among idolaters to stay and stick it out. What does God urge us to do? Flee! Like Israel fled Egypt the morning after Passover. Hurry. Don't think about it; go now while there is still a tiny window of opportunity to leave! And besides: the odds of a layman changing the moral direction of a church or a denomination is so remote as to be absurd. It is not the duty of a Believer to change Babylon; it is the duty of a Believer to detach from Babylon and leave it behind. Paul also addressed this same matter in the New Testament no doubt drawing from Jeremiah.

CJB 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 ¹⁴ *Do not yoke yourselves together in a team with unbelievers. For how can righteousness and lawlessness be partners? What fellowship does light have with darkness?* ¹⁵ *What harmony can there be between the Messiah and B'liya'al? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?*

¹⁶ *What agreement can there be between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God- as God said, "I will house myself in them,... and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

¹⁷ *Therefore ADONAI says, "'Go out from their midst; separate yourselves; don't even touch what is unclean. Then I myself will receive you. ¹⁸ In fact, I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters.'* says ADONAI-Tzva'ot."

You have been warned. I hope you take appropriate action if this applies to you.

Verse 6 says of Babylon's judgment that she is to be paid back for what she has done to others. This is referring to Babylon seducing others to join her in her sins and immoral values, thus making them commit spiritual suicide. What is to be her penalty? Double. She is to receive double the penalty for her crimes. What this is referring to is the Torah principle of lex talionis: proportional justice. That is, the punishment must be proportional to the nature of the crime. For instance, one cannot kill a person who steals from them. Rather the criminal is to return the stolen items and add something more for reparations for his crime. So, the Lord is saying that Babylon's sins are so egregious that proportional justice is off the table: she instead will receive double the penalty that is normally meted out for those specific sins. This is the justice Babylon receives, which offers no opportunity for survival or repentance; harshness and finality are the bywords.

Next the Lord says that He is going to use the same cup that the Harlot of Babylon used to draw others into her sin; a cup that was full of obscenities and filthy things that she fed to her customers. Now in return the Lord says He is going to brew her a double sized drink. And we know from earlier verses that what God brewed in the golden bowls that were poured out on the earth was His fury and wrath.

Next in verse 7 the Lord describes the punishment Babylon will receive for the glory and luxury she gave to herself: it shall be an equal measure of torment and sorrow. So there is a definite difference between the punishment that Babylon receives for what she did to the nations in enchanting them into joining her sins, versus what Babylon did for herself. She receives the standard proportional punishment for glorifying herself, but double the punishment for drawing others into her suicidal snare. Babylon viewed herself as royalty... a queen... who knows only confidence and self assurance, certain that she would never have to mourn as does a widow. But of course, this was simply delusional. Economic security, power and position, can vanish in an instant.

God responds to Babylon's delusional arrogance by saying that her fall will happen in a single day. Every imaginable calamity.... plagues, death, sorrow and famine..... will be visited upon her at her most proud moment. That she will be burned with fire means she will be utterly destroyed because biblically fire serves a dual purpose: to purify the righteous or to annihilate the wicked. How is such a powerful, pervasive, seemingly invincible force as Babylon able to be eradicated in but a single day? The end of verse 8 explains it: "Because Adonai, God, her Judge, is mighty".

I want to point out something here that those searching for answers about the End Times need to take notice. Back in chapter 17:16 we read this:

CJB Revelation 17:16-17 ¹⁶ As for the ten horns that you saw and the beast, they will hate the whore, bring her to ruin, leave her naked, eat her flesh and consume her with fire. ¹⁷ For God put it in their hearts to do what will fulfill his purpose, that is, to be of one mind and give their kingdom to the beast until God's words have accomplished their intent.

In other words, the supernatural part of Babylon's demise is that God put it into the hearts of 10 specific kings of the nations (represented by the 10 horns of the Beast) that she at one time ruled over in a special partnership to turn on her and destroy her. Why would these particular kings commit economic suicide by killing the goose that laid the golden egg? If Babylon served the purpose of making them rich and powerful why would they end the relationship by destroying her? I don't have a certain answer for this, only a theory. I believe it is that the religious fervor of these kings will be the reason for their seemingly irrational action of destroying the center of the world's economy. Who has made no bones about it that they would do such a thing in a heartbeat if they could? Today's leaders of Islam. Therefore it is my contention that one likely scenario (at least as viewed from the history vantage point of 2019) is that the Anti-Christ will make a deal with Islamic leaders in order that they can destroy the current Western based secular world economic system in exchange for supporting him, with their hope that this will eventually lead to a worldwide Muslim Caliphate. A hope that has been alive, and a driving force, behind Islam since it was founded by Muhammad in the 6th century and never has this dream been more powerful among Muslims than it is today. The only unanswered questions for them is exactly how to achieve this and which branch of Islam shall be the ruling party.

Verse 9 therefore speaks not about these 10 kings, but about the other nations of the earth

who have hitched their wagons of economic success to Babylon, unaware of what was coming. These kings of nations had only one goal: wealth and prosperity. So when these 10 kings destroy Babylon and the world economic system (something that they are so very pleased with themselves for doing), the rest of the world's leaders are in total shock. Those clients of the Whore of Babylon will wail and sob over her destruction as they witness the smoke of her burning. Whether this burning is literal or figurative it adds up to the same thing: a violent ending for Babylon that can only be the result of war. All they can do is stand at a distance, we're told, for fear of her torment. In other words, these cowardly nations have no stomach to fight for Babylon and their economic system because they were so certain that Babylon had it all under control. They did not want to share her fate of destruction at the hands of Babylon's conquerors.

We'll continue with Revelation 18 next time.