

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18



Revelation 18:1-3 (Babylon Is Fallen)

¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ²And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. ³For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

I've made the case in previous lessons that Babylon is a reference to Jerusalem, not Rome. The last chapter, this city, also called the harlot, was sitting on the beast and is not identified as the beast itself.

Here as the angel announces the fall or destruction of Babylon we have a few features of this city:

The Symbols of Babylon (18:1-3)

1. The city of Babylon “has become a dwelling place for demons” (v. 2). Demons were plentiful in Israel in the time of Jesus. Jesus said to the Jews, “So also will it be with this evil generation” (Matt 12:38-39, 43-45).
2. When Jerusalem was destroyed, it became a haunt for the unclean desert creatures (v. 2; cf. Matt 24:1-2).
3. Israel was charged with committing adultery with the kings of the earth (Ezek 16:14-16, 26, 28-30; 23:12-21).
4. The merchants of the earth have grown rich from her. It is best to see this as a reference to Israel’s worldliness.

Here as the angel announces the fall or destruction of Babylon we have a few features of this city:

1. It has become demon infested. (v. 2). These unclean spirits and unclean animals make sense to Israel who had laws of clean and unclean. Israel had become a place of evil spirits, especially at the time of Jesus. Matthew 12:38-39, 43-45, “38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” **39** But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah...**43** When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. **44** Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. **45** Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.
2. When Jerusalem was destroyed, it did become a haunt for the unclean desert creatures. Matthew 24:1-2, “Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. **2** But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will

1. not be thrown down.””
2. Israel was charged with committing adultery with the kings of the earth (Ezek 16:14-16, 26, 28-30; 23:12-21). This imagery was used to explain why God brought judgment upon Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Ezekiel 16:**14** And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord God.

15 “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his.

16 You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be.

26 You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

28 You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied.

29 You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied. **30** “How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute,

3. The merchants of the earth have grown rich from her. This seems to fit better with Rome (although the others do not). It is fitting to see this as a reference to Israel’s worldliness. This is not just a wicked city. But a city that was adulterous, chasing after foreign gods and nations.

Revelation 18:4-8

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. ⁷As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’ ⁸For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

This entire chapter is filled with allusions to the OT oracles against Babylon, Tyre, Sodom, and Jerusalem (Isaiah 13:1-14:23; 21:1-10; 47; Jer. 25:12-38; 50-1; Isaiah 23; Ezek 26-28).

The judgment here is just like God’s judgment of great cities and empires of the past.

Here is a call for God’s people to come out of Jerusalem, lest they be destroyed in that great city. (cf. Jesus in Luke 21:20-23; Heb 12:25-29; 13:13-14).

Verse 5 says “her sins are heaped high as heaven” is the same language used of Sodom (Gen 18:21; cf. Rev 11:8).

Verse 5 says, “God has remembered her iniquities.” In the new covenant God promises “I will remember them no more” (Jer 31:34).

Verse 6 repeats a similar theme of vengeance or justice for the martyrs that Jerusalem has slain (Rev 6:9-10). Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets, will be repaid.

Jeremiah 16:18 says, “I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin.” Jer. 17:18 says, “Bring on them the day of doom, and destroy them with double destruction!”

Verse 7 speaks about the city as the great harlot, living for herself with no eye to God's justice or judgment.

Verse 8 speaks of sudden destruction. Death, mourning, famine, and fire. All of this happened to Jerusalem. Before the temple was destroyed, it was set on fire in a great blaze.

The Symbols of Babylon (18:4-8)

1. God's people are called to come out of the city just as Jesus told believers to do (v. 4; cf. Luke 21:20-23; Heb 12:25-29; 13:13-14).
2. "Her sins are heaped high as heaven" (v. 5) is from Genesis 18:21 and God's judgment on Sodom, a reference already applied to Jerusalem (cf. Rev 11:8).
3. "God has remembered her iniquities" (v. 5) is in direct contrast to the new covenant promise to remember them no more (Jer 31:34).
4. God has sworn to pay Jerusalem back double for her persecution of the apostles (Jer 16:18, 17:18; cf. Rev 6:9-10).
5. Verse 7 reminds us that this city was the great harlot with no eye toward God's justice.
6. Verse 8 speaks about sudden destruction (this happened to Jerusalem and is unfit for Rome).

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The judgment here is just like God's judgment of great cities and empires of the past.

#1. Here is a call for God's people to come out of Jerusalem, lest they be destroyed in that great city. (cf. Jesus in Luke 21:20-23; Heb 12:25-29; 13:13-14).

Luke 21:20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

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Revelation 18:9-10

⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰ They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

V.9. Kings of the earth/land. Rulers in Israel. Will weep when they see Jerusalem burned.

V. 9. Committed sexual immorality. The idolatry and adultery of Israel.

V.10. "For in a single hour your judgment has come" The repeated theme of swift judgment (vv. 10, 17, 19).

For those who believe this is Rome, it must be noted that Rome did not fall suddenly.

Also Rome did not fall permanently (like Jerusalem which still has the ruins of the temple today). (vv. 11, 14, 21, 22, 23).

Revelation 18:11-14

¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. ¹⁴“The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!”

Many believe that this description better fits Rome than Jerusalem.

“it may be said that the demands of the passage do not require that the city in question be the greatest commercial center in the world—only that it was a wealthy, cosmopolitan trading city, by whose business international merchants were made rich. These things were certainly true of Jerusalem.”

Thomas Nelson. Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated (p. 492).
Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

Chilton writes, “The wealth of Jerusalem was a direct result of the blessings promised in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. God had made her a great commercial center, but she had abused the gift.”

Thomas Nelson. Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated (p. 492).
Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

Cf. Ezekiel 27:12-24. Using the language of Egypt’s fall, Babylon’s ruin, and God’s judgment against Tyre as a judgment against Jerusalem. The bride, became the harlot, and is now judged.

Revelation 18:15-18

¹⁵ The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

¹⁶ “Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

¹⁷ For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸ and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?”

Again, we have repeated remarks of the “great city.”

Revelation 11:8 says, “their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.”

Revelation 18:19-20

¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

Note why she is judged, she persecuted the saints, apostles, and prophets. We've seen already how this is a reference to Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and Jesus warned of Jerusalem's destruction because of it. This is a repeated theme in Revelation. The vengeance of God and vindication of his apostles.

Revelation 18:21-24

²¹Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; ²²and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, ²³and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. ²⁴And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."

This judgment will be decisive, v. 21 (cannot be said of Rome).

Verse 24. The blood of the prophets and saints. Again, what other city can this be but Jerusalem.

Shedding the Blood of Saints and Prophets

“Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” (Luke 13:33-34).

“Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!’” (Matt 23:34-37).

Revelation 19:1-5 (Rejoicing in Heaven)

¹After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

³Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” ⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” ⁵And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

The great multitude in heaven now erupts in praise.

The kings of the earth mourn, heaven erupts in joy.

Why? **Because of God’s just judgment.** Especially her idolatry and persecution of the servants of God.

Like Sodom, the great city is rightly destroyed. The saints from OT and NT (24 elders) worship.

Recapitulation?

1. Parallels are noted in the seals, trumpets, and bowls.
2. Likewise, for the harlot and city of Babylon.
3. "Loud voices...in heaven" (11:15; 19:1).
4. Declaration of the commencement of the reign of God (11:15, 17; 19:1, 6).
5. The 24 elders fall on their faces and worship (11:16; 19:4).
6. Avenging the blood of His servants is announced (11:18; 18:24; 19:2).
7. God's servants who fear him, small and great (11:18; 19:5).

The judgment in chapter 11 is clearly Jerusalem (cf. vv. 1-2, 8). The similarity here suggests it is the same judgment.

The same events but from different angles.

The same was true for Daniel's prophecies and also Ezekiel's.

Revelation 19:6-10 (Marriage Supper)

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ¹⁰Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

V. 6. Revelation 11:19 also speaks about sounds of thunder.

Interpreting the Marriage Supper

1. The bride is introduced for the first time. She represents the church.
2. The pure and faithful bride is contrasted with the unfaithful harlot (Israel).
3. The clothing of the bride is “the righteous deeds of the saints” (v. 8).
4. The judgment of the harlot and the wedding of the bride are correlative events. God is not just taking Gentiles into the Old Covenant, he is bringing in “the age to come” (Heb 2:5; 6:5) with the destruction of the unfaithful wife (Israel/Jerusalem) and the marriage of the church.
5. The church is said to be the chaste and holy bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27; 2 Cor 11:2-3).
6. Those who believe the truth, are holy, and endure to the end will be present at this glorious wedding (cf. 1 Tim 4:16; 1 John 3:2).
7. Being prepared for the wedding is a work of grace (v. 8; cf. Col 1:22; Eph 5:26).

#5

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

1 Cor 11:2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

#6. The church corporate is the bride. Individual believers are the wedding guests.

1 Tim 4:16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

#7. Col 1:22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

Eph 5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Revelation 19:11-16 (Rider on the White Horse)

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

This reference is clearly to Christ.

Verse 11. "Faithful and True"

The one who judges and makes war.

Verse 12. The description is from chapter 1. (the name that no one knows but himself?)

Verse 13. Dipped in blood (from battle or sacrifice?)

His name, in verse 13, is the "Word of God."

Verse 14. The armies of heaven. Angels? The saints? Seems better to be the saints (19:8). The church, the bride, is now part of the forces of God fighting alongside him.

Verse 15. From the mouth of Christ comes a sword. This is a **reference to his words**. That's how he will overcome the nations (*my kingdom is not of this world*. John 17).

Verse 16. Another name. King of kings and Lord of lords. The nations will be subject to him.

Revelation 19:11-16 (Rider on the White Horse)

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Previous visions saw the power of the beast come against God's people and an instrument of God's judgment upon Jerusalem.

Now the beast is at the receiving end. The beast waged war against Christ's church (Rev 12:17ff). But now the beast is overcome.

We've already seen the destruction of Babylon/Harlot/Jerusalem. The destruction was final, climactic, and definite. Rejoicing has already reached heaven and the church marries Christ. The era of the NC (we are the bride presently, not just future) has come.

Now we see the battle against Rome and the kings of the earth with the false prophet (the cult of the emperor).

Many conclude that this the Lord's 2nd coming at the end of time. Next slide gets into more.

Is Revelation 19 the 2nd Coming?

1. The battle is spiritual. Christ's weapon is the "word of God."
2. It is the preaching of the gospel that wages war against the beast (2 Cor 10:4-5) and brings the kingdom of God to earth (John 18:36).
3. This fits the context of Israel and the church and God removing the kingdom from Israel and giving it to the church, followed by his kingdom bringing Rome (the beast and the false prophet) to its knees through the gospel.
4. Christ said he would return in the same manner he went up (Acts 1:10-11). He did not go up on a horse.
5. Revelation 19 is the story of two feasts. The marriage feast of the church and the vultures feasting on an empire and religion conquered by the word of God.

Many conclude that this the Lord's 2nd coming at the end of time. I believe the Lord is coming physically at the end of time, but I don't believe that is what this passage is teaching.

Why?

- This return/battle is spiritual. The weapon of warfare is the "word of God" along with the saints with him.
- This is the preaching of the gospel that brings the fight to the beast. (2 Cor 10:4-5 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. **5** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ). John 18:**36** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."
- Fits the context. Harlot/Bride. New Babylon/New Jerusalem.
- Christ said he would return in the same manner he went up (Acts 1:10-11. **10** And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11** and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."). He did not go up on a horse. So he's not coming down on one

- either.

Therefore, this passage speaks about the conquering power of the gospel. After the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem in 70AD, the kingdom of Christ comes in power through the preaching of the gospel until Rome is made Christian. The beast is conquered. The emperor cult is abolished. The word of God has conquered.

There are two feasts. One the marriage feast of the church. Second, the carnage of vultures feasting on an empire and religion conquered by the word of God.

Significance of Revelation 18-19

1. God brought to pass the covenant curses after Israel repeatedly and high-handedly scorned his covenant blessings.
2. Israel has become like God's enemies (Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, Tyre) and so is judged like them.
3. In fact, Israel's spiritual adultery and her persecution of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles increases her judgment.
4. God is to be worshipped for his just judgments.
5. God's instrument for judgment (Rome) is also conquered by the gospel (cf. Isaiah 10).
6. Christ and his word triumphs over all his enemies.

#6. David S. Clark says, "Let the church remember that this rider on the white horse is the living Jesus, that he is in the forefront of every battle, that just as he conquered the beast and the false prophet, so he will conquer every enemy. . . . The rider on the white horse is still riding on. Let the church follow, clothed in linen, white and clean."

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