

Revelation

Lesson 20

Revelation Chapter 18

Arlington Church of Christ

In the previous chapter, John saw Rome (symbolically the Roman Empire) as a woman on a beast out in the wilderness. The symbolic description of her tells of her sins, the blood of the Christians that she had shed, and what was going to happen to her as a result.

Now the vision continues with additional information about her upcoming demise as decreed by God:

Revelation 18

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ² With a mighty voice he shouted:

“Fallen! Fallen is **Babylon the Great!**’ She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal. ³ For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

In Revelation, ‘Babylon’ is a symbolic reference to Rome and the Roman empire. Compare description to Isaiah –

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Isaiah 21:9 Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: ‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!

Isaiah 13:19-21

Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the pride and glory of the Babylonians, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; there no nomads will pitch their tents, there no shepherds will rest their flocks ²¹ But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about

⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; ⁵ for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

⁶ Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup.

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; 5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. 6 Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup.

 The Christians were told to leave Rome because of the things coming on the city. There were even Christians in the emperor’s household.

Philippians 4:22

All God’s people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

Genesis 19:12-13 The two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³ because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.”

Luke 21:20-21

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

Acts 18:2

There Paul met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

God always gives His people a warning of what is to come !

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God is going to take His promised vengeance on those have harmed His children. God always required that sins be atoned for. Jesus said that people will be repaid with the measure that they use.

Matthew 7:2

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.' ⁸ **Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.**

The attitude of Rome was that of pride, arrogance, and boasting. It was the similar arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar that cost him his sanity -

Daniel 4:29-31

as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

³¹ Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. (And for seven years, Nebuchadnezzar lost his sanity and lived like an animal)

Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.' ⁸ **Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.**

**Destruction will come quickly – (in one day) – a short time -
Babylon was destroyed in one night -**

Daniel 5:30-31 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two

History tells that the city of Rome fell in Sept 476 AD to troops commanded by Odovacar, a former Roman army commander who had been conscripted from his German tribe Siri. He entered the city and took control unopposed.

9 “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!”

Those nations who depended on Rome for protection and that had shared in all that Rome had provided them will be shocked at the judgment God has brought upon her.

¹¹ “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore— ¹² cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; ¹³ cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.¹⁴ “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’ ¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn ¹⁶ and cry out: “‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷ In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’

11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore— **12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.** **14 “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’** **15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn** **16 and cry out: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!** **17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’**

The merchants who had been supplying all of the luxuries to the city are mourning and weeping for they had lost their source of wealth.

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History tells us that at the time of John’s writing – those in Rome had a passion for silver dishes from Spain, silver bathtubs, silver mirrors and gold jewelry. Precious stones came from Scythia and were common in women’s jewelry. The Romans loved pearls – the bigger the better, and some even dissolved them in wine to say they drank a fortune. Gems were said to have medicinal properties and were worn as amulets to ward off diseases.....

Linen came from Egypt, and was very expensive. Purple came from Phoenicia and had become a passion for the people. Silk came from far off China and a pound of silk cost a pound of gold. Scarlet dye was another popular color and was used to cover banquet couches. Citron wood came from North Africa. It was sweet smelling and used for table tops set on marble legs. Ivory was used for decorative purposes – for statues, sculpture, and inlaying furniture. Corinthian brass and bronze was very expensive. Iron came from the region of the Black sea and from Spain. The Romans even had an official whose job it was to search the world for fine marble for buildings. Cinnamon was a luxury item from India and Zanzibar. The word translated ‘spice’ is the Greek ‘*amomon*’ and was a sweet smelling balsam used as a hair dressing. Incense, myrrh, frankincense were used in perfumes and scents to freshen the room. Wine was the everyday drink, some was boiled to make jelly. The carriages mentioned were private carriages and were often silver-plated. It is estimated that there were 60 million slaves.....

in the Roman empire. It was not unusual for a man to own 400 or more slaves. Slaves did literally everything for the Romans. There was even a market for 'freaks' as slaves – dwarves, giants, misshapen bodies, pointed heads. Slavery was a grim picture of people being used body and soul in the city of Rome for the service and entertainment of others.

***18 “Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ¹⁸ When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ ¹⁹ They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: ““Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth!
In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’***

Those with ships mourned and wept at the loss of their gain from the destruction of Rome. History tells us that ships from all over the world would arrive at Roman ports 24 hours a day every day.

20 “Rejoice over her, you heavens! Rejoice, you people of God! Rejoice, apostles and prophets! For God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you.”

The things that happened to Rome have come from God – they are His righteous judgment.

Romans 12:19

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

22 The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. 23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. 24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

The fall of Rome is compared to taking a big boulder and throwing it into the sea. The fall of the city is symbolic of the fall of the authority of the Roman empire. That empire will never be established again.

Jeremiah 51:63-64

When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. 64 Then say, 'So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall.'

By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. ²⁴ In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

The empire was destroyed because of its leading the world astray (promoting the emperor as god) and for shedding the blood of those who would follow the true God.

The next chapter begins with the reaction to all this in heaven: