

PART 12: THE TRIBULATION, CONT'D

CHAPTER 18



MAIN IDEA: BABYLON DESTROYED

“Babylon” in Revelation 17 and 18 represents both an apostate world religion and an evil city. They form a synergistic relationship during the first half of the Tribulation in order to gain world power. At first, the religion has the greater power but later the Antichrist (beast) overpowers and destroys this apostate religion.

The Babylon of this chapter undoubtedly includes an actual city, a politico-commercial system that becomes the means and basis of a new worldwide religious system by which the beast will be worshipped (Rev. 13). If you recall, the beast brings about his own worship by his control of commerce, or buying and selling. The chief element of Babylon emphasized in this chapter is commerce on a worldwide scale, i.e., international or multinational organizations. At the end of the Tribulation, it will be destroyed by God.¹

¹ (Walvoord 610), (LaHaye 278).

Babylon the Apostate Religion

In Revelation 17 the expression “*Babylon the Great, Mother of Prostitutes*” is used in connection with the Babylonian religion which at first dominates the Antichrist and his Federation.

The term “Babylon” in the Bible refers to a kind of Satanic influence found in many false religions which oppose and persecute true Christians.

These apostate religions often practiced rites in which people worshipped certain idols, and believed a person had to receive “divine revelation” to understand the gods. Lindsey believes the term “Mystery” in Revelation 17:5 is a reference to the occultic practices of ancient Babylon. It would include black magic, demon contact, séances, miraculous materializations, witchcraft, astrology and sorcery.

Babylon the City

“Babylon” in Revelation 17:18 and Revelation 18 is describing a great city which boasts of its great wealth and commercial resources (“*In her heart she boasts I sit as queen, I am not a widow, and I will never mourn*” Revelation 18:7). This Babylonian-like city will be a home for demons and evil spirits during the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation, it will be destroyed by God.

The city of Babylon has a long history and rose to considerable prominence in the time of Hammurabi (1726-1686 B.C.). She reached her height of glory under Nebuchadnezzar who lived in what is known as the Neo-Babylonian Period, beginning 600 years before Christ.

Babylon ransacked Jerusalem and carried the people of Judah into captivity (II Kings 24, II Chronicles 36). Just as Babylon was the Jews’ worst enemy, the Roman Empire was the worst enemy of the early Christians. John, who probably didn’t want to speak against Rome openly applied the name “Babylon” to this enemy of God’s people, and by extension, to all God’s enemies of all times.

In Genesis 11 Babylon (Tower of Babel) was first introduced. Its true character was revealed as rebelling against God by attempting to build a tower in recognition of her worship of heathen deities.

² Ibid, p. 234.

³ Walvoord, p. 610. Lahaye, p. 278.

⁴ Life Application Bible (NIV), p. 2321.

⁵ Ibid, p. 605.

Table 1 A comparison of Babylon the apostate religion and Babylon the city

Babylon the Religion	Babylon the City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is an apostate Satanic-empowered religion which is associated with Rome (17:3, 7). ▪ Has worldwide domination during the first half of the Tribulation (17:1-2, 15). ▪ Temporarily dominates the Antichrist and his federation (17:3) ▪ It is associated with an attire of purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls (17:4) ▪ It martyrs those who belong to Christ (17:6). ▪ It will eventually be destroyed by the Antichrist and his Ten-Nation Federation (17:16). ▪ Her destruction most likely happens at the mid-point of the Tribulation when people are forced to worship the Antichrist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is also a city (17:18) ▪ This city will be the home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit (18:2) ▪ The city is associated with the Ten-Nation Federation (ten horns) which comes out of the old Roman Empire area and is controlled by the Antichrist during the Tribulation (17:3, 7) ▪ It is the geographical center for world commerce during the Tribulation (18:3, 11-13). ▪ It will be destroyed by God in one hour at the end of the Tribulation. This destruction is also prophecied in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:5-6, 10, 19-22; 14:1-6, 22, 25-26; Jeremiah 51).

COMMENTS

Judgment pronounced (18:1-3)

The announcement is made by another angel. Note four things about this angel.

- First, he is “another” angel. “Another” is *allos* meaning another of the same kind as those angels that preceded him. This is not the Lord nor is there any reason to see this as the Lord since angels do have great power and often display great glory.
- Second, that “he comes down from heaven” points to the fact this judgment comes from God.
- Third, he has “great authority.” “Authority” in the original language is *exousia* which means “liberty, or authority” and then “power to act.” As an angel and messenger of God, he comes possessing supernatural authority and

power to execute judgment on behalf of God.

- Fourth, “the earth was illumined with his glory.”

Judgment avoided (18:4-5)

As John was undoubtedly thinking on the announcement of verses 1-3, another voice is heard from heaven calling believers to separation from Babylon both as a city and as a materialistic and godless system of commercialism. In its primary interpretation, this appeal will be addressed to those believers who will be living in the Tribulation days and who like believers in every age will be tempted to compromise. In its application it is a relevant call to believers in every day to avoid compromise with Satan’s world system in its every form — religious and commercial.

Judgment described (18:6-8)

Because of the enormity of her sin and because of the holy character of God— judgment is doubled. The thing judged here is most likely the godless system since the final judgment of unbelievers does not come until the great white throne of Revelation 20. She has assumed the position of queen; she has glorified herself and so to the same degree that she has rebelled against God, He retaliates in holy and righteous indignation to dethrone her.

Judgment Lamented (18:9-19)

The kings here refer to a wider group of kings than the ten-nation federation of 17:12-16. This reaches out to all the other kings (world leaders) of the earth who are caught up in the web of the commercialism of the day. They all mourn because of the destruction of Babylon. Why? Because her commercialism means the control of the people and luxury in their courts, all of which is now lost. The acts of immorality refer to their spiritual and political apostasy which rejects the divine standards of God and which accepts instead the materialism of commercial Babylon as well as its humanism.

Judgment Celebrated (18:20)

“Rejoice” is a command. God’s people are to find joy in the prospects of Babylon’s overthrow and in the actual occurrence when it is brought to pass at the end of the Tribulation. The verb rejoice means “to cheer, gladden,” but in the passive voice as it is here, it means “allow yourself to *receive* happiness, joy, from the truth of God’s Word about Babylon and its destruction.” This is what God’s Word should do for the believer when it is known and believed.

Judgment Completed (18:21-23a)

John sees a mighty angel throw a stone, one like a great millstone, into the sea. This picture is designed to portray the downfall of the great city and its judgment which will be:

- Sudden. It will be sudden as when a stone falls into the sea, suddenly, with a splash
- Violent, catastrophic. Such a great stone (like a meteor) would cause tidal waves which move across land destroying everything in their path. The destruction of Babylon leads to the destruction of the rest of its system.
- Complete, total. Like a stone which is cast into the sea and sinks out of sight, so the destruction of Babylon will be so complete that it will be found no more, never to rise again.

Judgment Justified (18:23b-24)

Two main reasons are given for Babylon's destruction:

- Babylon's use of sorcery⁶ to deceive the nations.
- Babylon's murderous slaughter of God's people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Verse 4 (NIV) says a voice cries out to believers, "Come out of her, my people." Does this mean that Christians are to isolate themselves from sinful societies and live in communities inhabited only with other Christians? Explain your answer.
2. Verses 11-13 reveal how merchants will no longer be able to sell their merchandize when Babylon is destroyed. Which of their products do you find most offensive, and why?
3. Verse 20 says God's people are to rejoice when Babylon is judged. According to Matthew 5:44 isn't this the opposite response believers should have toward those people?

⁶ The Greek word for sorcery is *pharmakeia* where we get the word "drugs." (Mounce 1302).