

Revelation Chapter 18 Handout

This is the description of the previously announced judgment of the prostitute (17:1). Babylon has been described as a prostitute and now as a city... a great commercial city. This is not merely a description of the fall of Rome or any other city. It is a depiction of the destruction of the entire satanic view of wealth and power as the be all and end all of creation. This becomes both the song of triumph of those who have been oppressed and the lamentation of a funeral dirge for those whose wealth was created by the beast.

18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. 2 He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast. 3 For all the 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 have grown rich from the power of her luxury."

Another angel...made bright with his splendor - this is perhaps the greatest announcement since the birth of Christ. Just as the sky was filled with the glory and splendor of God at that moment, so too now is the announcement of the enemies destruction.

Fallen, Fallen - this brings us back to Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:8) in which we read about the fall of the real Babylon. This is a theme in scripture. All those who oppose God and God's people fall. First it was Egypt, then Assyria, then Babylon and later Persia. So this is not an unexpected event.

A haunt - Again this is the same fate as befell these other city states. They became wastelands for a time. This is also predicted in Isaiah and Jeremiah (34:11; 50:39). So from being on top of the world they become a wilderness.

For all the nations - this reminds the readers of the judgment of Tyre and Babylon (Isa 23:17; Jer 51:7). The idea of fornication here is not merely worshipping other gods, but worshipping wealth. This is wealth that has been gained at the expense of justice and righteousness.

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds;

mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.
7 As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,
so give her a like measure of torment and grief.

Since in her heart she says,
'I rule as a queen;
I am no widow,
and I will never see grief,'
8 therefore her plagues will come in a single day--
pestilence and mourning and famine--
and she will be burned with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

Come out of her my people - this is the burden of Jeremiah's refrain about Babylon (Jer 50:8; 51:6-9). This refrain does not mean that the people are actually supposed to physically leave the city. In fact scripture told those exiles in Babylon to settle down and become productive. Instead it refers to a spiritual removal. The followers of God are not to participate in the injustices and practices of those around them. This is part of the first two chapters and the seven churches.

God has remembered her iniquities - one of the worries of any oppressed people is that those who hurt them will get away with it; that there will be no justice. The readers are reminded here that there will be justice and God will take care of it.

Repay her double - one image of this could be the fall of Germany after WWII. The destruction was massive...beyond what they had caused. The writer is reminding us that the consequences for hurting God's people are not merely an eye for an eye... it is double.

Luxuriously...in her heart...I will never see grief - these are the essence of all of her sin. First she has used the back breaking labor of others to increase her own wealth. She has not shared what God has given her. Second, the in her heart refers to her pride, she is proud of her power that she is a queen and rules over all. Third is her avoidance of suffering (I will see no grief). She believes her wealth and power will save her. Instead they will drag her down.

Therefore - the consequences of her actions and attitude will see a sudden fall. She will be utterly destroyed...burned with fire. Not only will she be sick, but all she has will be lost.

Lord God - this is not the natural consequence of time and history. Her downfall will be at the hand of the Lord.

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication 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, the great city,
Babylon, the mighty city!
For in one hour your judgment has come."

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves--and human lives.

14 "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!"

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, the great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

17 For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste!"

And all shipmasters and seafarers, 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?"

19 And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out,

"Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!

For in one hour she has been laid waste.

Kings of the earth...merchants of the earth...shipmasters of the earth - this was power and luxury shared with others as a way to control them. This comes from Ezekiel 27 and the fall of Tyre. What we see is that Babylon had spread its tentacles far and wide. There were many who profited from her evil. There were many who were willing to sell their souls for what luxury can buy.

Committee fornication and lived in luxury...no one buys - Babylon was not alone. There were many who would happily share in her injustice and cruelty to others. The lure of wealth and power have always been present and so there were those who made their living off of her. They see it all disappearing and proclaim woe three different times... as if for each beast.

Stand far off - the heat of the fire and the fear of being burned as well keep the others at a distance. Fire spread quickly in this day and so distance was the only hope of survival. They are rats leaving a sinking ship. They fear her torment.

In one hour - They are also afraid of the suddenness of the fall. None of them saw it coming... sort of reminds us of Enron.

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets! For God has given judgment for you against her."

Rejoice - this is hardly what many of us expect. We have been taught to be nice. However to gain an understanding all we have to do is to look at pictures

from the end of WWII when Japan finally fell. There was great rejoicing all over the world because of the pain and destruction that the Empire of Japan had caused. This is also one reason people in some parts of the world rejoiced at 911. They see us as the great Satan who is attempting to make the world look like us (wealth, pornography, violence).

For you – God has done this for us. God's love for us was so great that he brought down our oppressors and set us free.

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

“With such violence Babylon the great city

will be thrown down,

and will be found no more;

22 and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters

will be heard in you no more;

and an artisan of any trade

will be found in you no more;

and the sound of the millstone

will be heard in you no more;

23 and 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 magnates of the earth,

and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

24 And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth.”

Mill stone – very large and very heavy and thus it sinks instantly. There is no hope for it to be raised once it has hit the water.

Found no more – there will not even be any evidence of it.

Sound of – this is a marvelous piece of poetry in which we sense the complete and utter destruction of a nation. There will not be one breath of life left in it in any way. There will be no music, no commerce and no weddings (family life).

All nations were deceived – this is not a local phenomenon. This is a universal deception. All people are deceived by the satanic forces at work.

Found the blood – this is a just judgment because they have slain the innocent...not only of God's people but of all people across the earth. Everyone has suffered from the evil that has been at work.