

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/16/10 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 18 "The Judgment Climaxes: The Fall of Babylon"--part 4

Money. Banks. Skyscrapers. Wall Street. Houses. Cars. Boats. Golf clubs. Flower beds. It's the stuff of life. And it's not going to last forever.

Things are going to change some day, not just for you and me as individuals, but for this entire planet. Things are going to *change*. We know that because God has told us so in the final chapter of the Book.

We're approaching the end of the book of Revelation. The Lord wanted His people to know what would happen at the end of this age so He allowed the apostle John to behold a series of visions. These are recorded in the final book of the canon.

Tonight we'll be looking at an amazing scene which records the climax of the judgment that will occur in the tribulation period. Revelation 18 depicts the fall of Babylon.

Who is Babylon? What effect will her fall have on the earth? Why will she fall? We'll explore these and other related questions as we move through the text.

First, let's read Revelation 18...

The flow of the chapter is divided into three parts, each dealing with John's observation of three particular angels or beings (the second voice isn't called an angel):

verse 1 "I saw another angel"

verse 4 "Then I heard another voice"

verse 21 "Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder..."

Each of these three beings predict and describe the coming fall of Babylon the Great.

Which raises an important question. Just who is this "Babylon the Great?"

Notice the references to Babylon within the text:

verse 1 "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!"

verse 4 "Come out of *her*, my people." [notice the feminine pronoun]

verse 9 "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her"

verse 10 "Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power."

verse 16 "Wow! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple..."

verse 24 "In her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints"

Who is the "woman," this "city" called Babylon? In chapter 17 she was referred to as "the great prostitute" (1) and the "mother of prostitutes" (5). There she was "drunk with the blood of the saints" (6). Verse 15 indicates that "the prostitute" sits on "waters" which are "peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages."

She had a close tie with the "beast and the ten horns" (16) but they turned on the woman, brought her to ruin, and left her naked (16).

Who is this woman? Verse 18 concludes, "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

So who is this "Babylon?" The *NIVsb* offers a brief summary of the common interpretations (p. 1940, note on 14:8): "Ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia was the political, commercial and religious center of a world empire. It was noted for its luxury and moral decadence. The title 'Babylon the Great' is taken from Daniel 4:30. According to some it is used in Revelation...for Rome as the center of opposition to God and his people. According to others, it represents the whole political and religious system of the world in general. According to still others, it is to be understood as literal Babylon--rebuilt and restored."

Whatever it is, the day is coming when this anti-God, world-ruling-city or system is going to fall. And concerning its fall, here's what John saw.

I. John saw another angel (1-3).

A. He describes his characteristics (1).

Q: What's true of this angel?

B. He records his message: "Babylon the Great is fallen! (2-3)."

Q: What's true of Babylon? We learn a couple of important things about it in verses 2-3.

1. *Babylon's character is demonic.*

Q: What will fallen Babylon become?

Note how John speaks of this future event as though it has already been accomplished. Again, he's recording a vision of this future event.

2. *Babylon's strategy is economic.*

Q: What part will economics seem to play in Babylon's world-wide-influence according to verse 3? Don't miss this. They say that "money talks." Apparently, Babylon will form some type of alliance with the nations based on economics. Notice the connection between power, money, and luxury here.

II. John heard another voice (4-20).

Q: What are we told about this voice?

A. He records a warning (4-8).

1. *Come out (4-5).*

Q: To whom is this warning given? "My people" (who is that?) This is a call for separation. Why must God's people separate themselves from the world system, in this case, from *the ultimate* world system?

2. *Pay back (6-7).*

Q: To whom is this request given? To God?

3. *The Lord will judge her (8).*

Q: How long will it take? In one day...

B. He records the reaction to Babylon's fall (9-20).

Notice how the fall of Babylon will affect the whole world. John mentions three parties who will lament (note the threefold "woes" in verses 10, 16, and 19).

1. *The kings of the earth will moan (9-10).*

This doesn't seem to refer to the "ten kings" in 17:12, for they, along with the beast, will have a part in overthrowing Babylon (17:16).

Q: What will they cry? "Woe, woe..."

Who else will mourn?...

2. *The merchants of the earth will moan (11-17a).*

Q: Why will they mourn? Verse 11--because no one buys their cargoes any more. Again, see the emphasis on economics. There will be a vast global economy in that day, and it will revolve around and depend upon the powerful influence of "Babylon." But once Babylon falls, so does the economy.

Why are the merchants weeping? Because of their own financial loss. Who else?...

3. *The seamen will moan (17b-20).*

Q: What indicators are given to show the severity of their grieving?

Notice how the world will go into depression. And why? Because of dollars--the *loss* of dollars.

Q: But not everyone will mourn? Who will rejoice? Verse 20

III. John saw and heard a third angel (21-24).

A. The angel illustrated the fall of Babylon (21).

Q: What did he do?

1. *He threw a boulder into the sea.*

Q: Why did he say he did that?

2. *This is what will happen to Babylon.*

B. The angel explained the effect of Babylon's fall (22-24).

Q: What kind of effect will it have? There will be no more...

1. *No more music (22a)*--not in Babylon

2. *No more work and productivity (22b)*--Trade will end (talk about a stock market crash! This economic earthquake will make 1929 look like a bump in the road!)

3. *No more light (23a)*

4. *No more good times (23b)*

5. *No more merchandising (23c)*

Q: According to verse 23, how will Babylon achieve such world-wide sway? "By your magic spell all the nations were led astray..."

And most importantly, one final effect...

6. *No more killing of God's people (24)*

Verse 24 indicates that Babylon will be a prime instigator of the persecution of tribulation saints. Three groups are mentioned--prophets, saints, and all who have been killed on the earth, to show the world-wide spread of Babylon's evil power. But no more.

The vision itself is fairly straightforward. The difficult question is, what does it all mean? Let's spell out some implications...

Implications:

1. *Those who resist God are doomed.*

It will be true of the *ultimate* resister of God, namely "Babylon the Great." And the implication is it's also true of every other "lesser" God-resister.

Discuss: How should knowing this truth affect us?

2. *God will deal seriously with the sin of materialism.*

We are bombarded by materialism in our day. How so? This vision shouts to us, "Materialism is not the answer." God doesn't give us money so we can hoard it, stockpile it, or use it as leverage to get friends and power. That's the world's view of money and material goods. That's the world's way, and we see the epitome of it right here in Revelation 18.

Discuss: What attitude does God want us to have towards material goods?

3. *We mustn't put our hope in something that's doomed to fail.*