Revelation 17–18 — Babylon The Great

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

H. H. Snell

The latter chapters of the Book of Revelation bring before us some remarkable instruction in the way of contrast. It seems as if the lines that Satan pursued, and the actings of God, were here put side by side to show the just judgment upon men, the crushing of Satan, and the establishment of the kingdom and glory of God. We have previously noticed the devil's power of mimicry, his artful way of having something outwardly resembling what is of God, by which to accomplish his own evil purposes of dishonoring Christ and deceiving the world. These things are very manifest in the closing scenes of this marvelous book, and they help us much to understand things as they now are, as well as to perceive to what they are rapidly hastening. In the 17th and 18th chapters we have a woman and a city symbolically set before us; and in the following chapters we have also a woman and a city. The one filthy and doomed to eternal destruction; the other holy and having the glory of God. How unspeakably wide the contrast! Both these scenes were shown to John by an angel, perhaps the same angel, as the description is much the same in both instances. (Compare Rev. 17:1, with Rev. 21:9.) In the one he saw the great whore (Rev. 17:1),

in the other the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9).

To see the false and corrupt one, he had to go into the wilderness -- the place outside God's presence, her proper sphere; to behold the other, the Bride, "dressed in beauty not her own," he was carried into a great and high mountain, when he saw her descending out of heaven from God. But in both instances we are told that he was in the Spirit {Rev. 17:3, 21:10}

in order to see these things. This is an important point to observe; for it teaches us that we need the Holy Ghost to perceive the workings and devices of Satan, as much as we do to discern the ways and purposes of God. How is it that many are in such ignorance of these things, and judge them matters of no importance? How is it that some persons, who are surrounded with corrupt Christianity, and often hear about the standing and glory of the co-heirs of Christ, yet never seem to perceive and grasp either of them as realities? Is it not because they are not shown them by the Holy Ghost? They may try to grasp them intellectually, and fail. Reason and argument are insufficient for apprehending spiritual mysteries. Babylon is called a mystery {Rev. 17:5};

Christ and the Church

the mystery {see Eph. 5:32}.

Both are now revealed to us, and the revelations are to be received in all simplicity. For this, we need to be in the Spirit.

These things were shown to John; the angel said, Come hither; I will shew unto thee {Rev. 17:10}

Let us never forget that the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth, takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us, and that it is by faith alone we receive God's revelation, whether we can understand it or not. As we have said, Satan is an imitator, so that we have in the latter chapters of this book similarities as well as contrasts. God has a bride, Satan has a harlot. God's people are seated in the heavenlies, so we are repeatedly told that the woman sitteth; the former are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: the latter sits upon the beast. The harlot is "arrayed" in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls: but to the bride was granted that she should be "arrayed" in fine linen, clean and white. The harlot holds a golden cup in her hand, to give drink to thirsty souls; but only to deceive and intoxicate -- to act upon the senses, having no power effectually to relieve a burdened heart and conscience. It is a bewitching cup. It is full of wine of fornication, making all drunk who take it, and hardens the heart toward Christ. It is brim full of wine of filthiness and abomination. But, thank God, there is another cup which souls may drink -- a cup of blessing, full of peace and consolation and joy for troubled, sin-sick souls; it is the cup of the Savior's blood, full of the love of God to sinners, which draws the heart to God, and keeps the heart for God. The cup of blessing which we bless {1 Cor. 10:16}

cheers both God and man, fills the soul with joy and gladness, and restores the distrustful heart to happy confidence in God. It is the best wine, which makes the lips to speak (Cant. 7:9); it makes the whole soul to enter into the unutterable sorrows of Jesus on the cross, when He poured out His soul unto death {see Isa. 53:12},

and separates the affections and desires unto God and Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore from this present evil world. It is "The balm of life, the cure of woe, The measure and the pledge of love; The sinner's refuge here below, The angels' theme in heaven above."

The harlot's cup can only gratify the fleshly appetite for a passing moment, and end in wailing and gnashing of teeth; it stands in widest contrast with the

Notes on the Revelation living water {John 4:10; 7:38}

of the gospel, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The woman's heart and desires are gratified with the kings of this world; the inhabitants of the earth drink of her intoxicating cup; thus she receives a wide and popular patronage: but those who are with the Lamb are called (let us think of this) and chosen and faithful (Rev. 17:14). Oneness of mind may characterize those who are in league with the harlot, as one mind and one judgment should characterize God's children now; but her doom shall come, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, while the Bride shall shine in unutterable beauty and uncreated light. In pride and selfesteem, the harlot has long said, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow

[while the saints are mourning the absence of their loving Lord]; yet her judgment and eternal abasement shall quickly come. And while the Church of God now knows tribulation and suffering and rejection for Christ's sake, the wicked woman prospers in riches, successful commerce, and abundance

of delicacies; yet suddenly -in one hour -- shall God's judgment overtake her. Her mirth then will for ever cease, her light be for ever extinguished, and her dainty and goodly things for ever depart from her. Her name is written in her forehead, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5},

but is read only by those who are taught of God's Spirit. Alas! how unlike God's loved ones! of whom it is said, They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

We have already seen the fall of Babylon referred to both in the 14th and 16th chapters. In the 17th and 18th chapters we have details of her characteristics. She is presented under two symbols, a woman and a city, and they seem both needed; the one to show us her principles, the other the results of her harlotry. We see, in the following chapters, in the Bride and the city, the relationship of affection in which she stands to God and the Lamb, and her subsequent display in glory, having the glory of God. Babylon means confusion -- the cunning union of things Divine and worldly; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, trafficking with the things of God. It has therefore both a religious and civil aspect. It is the old sin of Cain, who, with a false religion, murdered his righteous brother, deliberately went out from the presence of God, and obtained a place of ease, luxury, and influence in the earth. We do violence to truth to limit Babylon to Romanism. It abounds in Protestantism, and in every thing and place where the name of Christ is used to sanction worldliness; or where the truth of revelation is used for worldly advancement, instead of for the glory of God. This is unfaithfulness to Christ; it is referred to by the apostle James when he says, Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

This is very solemn and searching, and it behoves us to see well to it that we are spiritual, and not carnal, cleaving to the Lord Himself with full purpose of heart, instead of to this present evil world. Paul was very watchful on this point in his care over the saints. He says, I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, 3).

Babylon of the Apocalypse cannot be a literal city, because we are told that in her was found the blood of all that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24);

but it is religious corruption, which, like Babylon of old, often takes God's people captive. It is a widespread system: man in the flesh taking up and corrupting the things of God, making himself or the world the object, instead of God's glory; ensnaring the affections from God and Christ, and filling the mind with earthliness. It began very early in the world, and our Lord seemed to refer to it when He said to the Pharisees, Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the

altar (Matt. 23:34, 35).

Oh, beloved in the Lord! let us watch against the spirit of Babylon which surrounds us on almost every hand, for it easily and plausibly insinuates itself. What harm is there, says one or another, in going here and there, and seeing this and that? Can we do it in obedience to our Lord? Is it not a temptation to take a sip out of the harlot's intoxicating cup? Let us feed upon Christ; for His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed: this will strengthen our faith and love, and make us abhor instead of taste the harlot's cup. "Redouble your precautions, O ye saints! -Aware of the destroyer! Stop the gaps Where, entering silently, he spoils the vines. Be cautious! for your enemy is strong; To sleepless malice adds perfected craft, And spiteful certainty of shortening rule; To know if ye are Christ's, your struggling souls Resist a baffled and defeated foe. 'Take ye these foes,' who do contrive the woe Of God's Jerusalem! Expose their craft! Seize your keen weapons, servants of the Lord, And sword in hand, yea, in your armour, build Her walls and fences that are broken down; The weakest is made strong who cleaves to Christ."

The former part of the seventeenth chapter gives us the principles of the false woman -- Babylon the Great; the latter part gives us the interpretation of the symbols. She is seen sitting upon many waters {Rev. 17:1}

upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns {Rev. 17:3}.

Her raiment is purple and scarlet colour, and she is decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls {Rev. 17:4}.

She holds in her hand a golden cup, brim full of abominations and filthiness. Abominations in the Old Testament often mean idolatries. (See Deut. 32:16; 1 Kings 11:5-7.) Her outward appearance is thus symbolized. Her character is, that she is drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. She plays the harlot with kings, and she has intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth with her wine. Thus is she both corrupt and corrupting. Mystery is written upon her forehead, and her name is, The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5}.

Her rest is in the world that crucified the Lord of glory. The nations are her support. Her repose is in the bosom of the people. Her evil heart knows no higher range than self-pleasing, walking before men, and the spirit of the world which is energized by Satan. Her display is in the very things which the Scripture enjoins modest women to refuse, namely, gold, and pearls, and costly array {see 1 Tim. 2:9}.

Her great object is to corrupt others by her intoxicating wine. Her enmity to God is manifested by her thirst for the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. Such are some of the characteristics of this unchaste woman; and let us never forget that the beloved apostle, at Patmos, needed to be in the Spirit

to detect her corrupt character and ways, and so do we. The two evils of the flesh, corruption and violence, mentioned in Gen. 6:12, 13, are seen in full growth in the woman and the beast. The

explanation of the symbolic description of the woman, and of the beast which carrieth her, is brought before us in the eighth and following verses.

The scarlet-coloured beast which carried the woman is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. This shows its Satanic origin and hellish destiny. It has seven heads and ten horns, both without crowns, and may be easily identified with the beast of the thirteenth chapter, which we judge to be the Roman empire in its future resuscitated state. 10 We are told also, that the beast was, and is not, and yet shall be; thus giving it a past and future, but not a present existence. And is not this exactly the fact with regard to the Roman empire? It has been in full energy, and for a long time it has not been known as an empire: but by and by the image of Daniel will be manifested in ten toes, or kingdoms, and the empire be revived -- only, be it remembered, under special Satanic energy; it shall ascend out of the bottomless pit {Rev. 17:8}.

10. In Rev. 12 the beast's heads are crowned; in Rev. 13 the ten horns are crowned; and here neither heads nor horns are crowned.

But while the beast may thus be recognized as the Roman empire, we must also regard the beast as headed up in a man who wields its entire power; for the beast is spoken of in both these aspects: and then the false prophet {see Rev. 13:11-17}

will compel all to bow down and worship the beast, and to have his name in their foreheads or hands. Thus we are told again, what has been previously remarked, that this Son of perdition will be the object of a world-wide admiration. It is said that they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall come again (see Rev. 17:8).

None are free from this delusion but those whose names are in the Book of Life. It may be well to observe here, in passing, that the Church is spoken of as chosen in Christ, not from, but before the foundation of the world. The saints who suffer under the beast will not be the Church -- the body of Christ; for, as we have repeatedly noticed, we shall have been caught up before these terrible days, to meet the Lord in the air; but they will be Jewish saints, and are spoken of as in connection with that which is from the foundation of the world. Some have thought that the seven-hilled city is Rome, because we are told that the seven heads upon which the woman sitteth are seven mountains {see Rev. 17:9};

others have gone so far as to state, that because of this, Babylon the Great must be Popery, as if this widespread system were limited to that terrible work. Rome, however, as the seven-hilled city, may be referred to, but we must not limit our view of these principles to Rome. And while Romanism is certainly a large example of Babylon, and most emphatically referred to here, we may he assured that Babylon the Great abounds also in Protestantism, or wherever the world's support is resorted to in connection with the name and work of the Lord. It is difficult almost to say where Babylon is not; for when we see the line of demarcation between the Church and the world so obliterated, and remember how perfectly distinct the teaching of our Lord and of His apostles was as to the opposite character of

flesh and spirit, the world and the Church, we must conclude that Babel, or confusion, must be wherever the Lord is not wholly followed, His word fully obeyed, His Holy Spirit practically honored. But is not the true explanation of these seven hills to be found in the neat verse? May we not regard the seven mountains, or heads, as seven potentates or forms of government; for mountains may be regarded as representative of power or authority, the woman finding her rest in those national authorities. But however this may be, we are distinctly told immediately after, that they are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short time (see Rev. 17:10).

That the five kings are five potentates which had passed away before the apocalyptic visions were made known to John, that one was then in existence, and another was to appear, and continue for a short time, we should be ready enough to admit, for it is obvious; but here again we find this last potentate, whose duration

is so brief, has been by some attributed to popery. But it seems unreasonable, that a system, which has existed for so many centuries should be understood to be that which only continues for a short space,

or a little time,

especially when this king is put in connection with five other kings which had passed away. There is now a remarkable turn given to the description of the seven heads, for an eighth head springs up, which is said to be of the seven. It is the beast -- the Man of Sin, who impersonates the Roman empire, and in this description is identified with it. We are told, The beast that was, and is not, he even is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition {Rev. 17:11}.

And further, we are informed that he, though springing out of the seven heads, and of course coming after them, will be in league with the ten horns, the kings of the resuscitated Roman empire, the ten kingdoms of Daniel, which are brought upon the scene by and by, but only to continue for a brief period. All that is revealed seems to show us the rapidity with which events follow each other as the day approaches. The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast (Rev. 17:12).

These kings are all confederated together, fraternized, as some would say, and it is for the beast to help on the Satanic scheme of this Son of perdition. What an association! What a union! What a combination of human and Satanic energy! Ah! union and unity are common words in our day, and give impetus to principles of action on all sides; but we do well to ask the question, Is the proposed unity with Christ, or against Him? for He said, He that is not with me is against me {Matt. 12:30, Luke 11:23}.

This is getting more and more manifest, and ere long every individual will have to take his stand either with Christ or against Him. As to these kings, we are told, These have one mind, and shall give

their power and strength unto the beast (Rev. 17:13).

The active energy of this confederacy of the beast and kings of the earth is purely against Christ, but, as we might expect, their unity and co-operation only end in their everlasting shame and destruction. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

The last clause shows us that the Church is with Christ at that time; the words, called, and chosen, and faithful,

are exactly those used by the apostle in addressing the Church of God.

We need to turn again to the book of Daniel to help us in the elucidation of the ten horns. The prophet saw a fourth beast, diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn. . . . In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit. . . . I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. . . . I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth; and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them. . . . And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him (Dan. 7:7-27).

Thus we see that the beast with ten horns, which Daniel saw, remarkably corresponds with the ten-horned beast of the Apocalypse, and the other little horn of Daniel which came up after them, with the eighth king of the Revelation. The saints, too, of Daniel -- first under the persecution of the great oppressor, and then, when God undertakes for them, brought into the blessing of the millennial kingdom, the hope of all true Israelites -- correspond with the saints of the book of Revelation. They get into their promised blessing of the kingdom with judgment (see Isa. 1:27); on the other hand, we enter our eternal and heavenly blessing by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We are further told, that the kings and the beast will be confederated together against the woman. The many waters, on which we saw her sitting in the first verse, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Rev. 17:15);

that is, the inhabitants of many countries. This is her rest at present; but, if I mistake not, it is already beginning to be disturbed, and they will soon shake her off. Would that it were for something

better; but, alas! they prefer their own carnal liberty and self-will. Their minds will become changed towards her, and they will hate her. Thus nominal Christianity will end in open infidelity. Now most men are pleased with some sort of religion, but ere long they will find their liberty and pleasure only in open defiance of the living and true God. The judgment, however, of this woman, is of God. He makes the wrath of the wicked to execute His own counsels; for God will put it into their hearts to fulfil His will. This is very solemn. If the judgment of God came severely upon apostate Israel, how much more terrible shall the stroke be upon the apostate Church.

The ten horns which thou sawest, [not "upon," but] and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree [or act with one mind], and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. (Rev. 17:16, 17).

Thus we see that this confederacy will hate the harlot, rob her of her riches, strip her of her costliness, deprive her of all she values, and eat her up, to advance the kingdom of the beast. All this God will accomplish, in His own time and way, for His own glory; and show that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, and that He can take the wise in their own craftiness.

The symbolic character of the woman is referred to in the last verse of this chapter, and it links us on with the following chapter, for she is called both a woman and a city. This shows how entirely symbolic the whole account is, and could not be understood to be a material city. She is described as having kingship over kings. The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth {Rev. 17:18}.

In the seventeenth chapter we saw the instrumentality employed by God in the judgment of Babylon the Great, but in the eighteenth chapter God alone appears as having taken vengeance upon this terrible abomination, which has both a religious and a civil, or rather a political aspect. It is not the sin of adultery which is charged upon Babylon, but fornication. Israel was addressed by the prophet Jeremiah as married to Jehovah (Jer. 3:14); and Ezekiel says, Thou hast not been an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband (Ezek. 16:31, 32).

But the Church is only espoused, having the marriage in anticipation; therefore the sin of those professing to be betrothed to the Son of God, who depart in heart and ways from Him for the hire of the seducer, is fornication, or harlotry. To confess Christ with the lip, while the affections and desires of the soul are going out after other objects, such as the pride, lust, and gain of this world, is the special sin here marked out. Happy those whose affections are so set upon Jesus as to be able to say in truth He is all my salvation, and all my desire {see 2 Sam. 23:5}.

The 18th chapter opens by John telling us that he saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory, It was another angel, not the same angel that showed him the woman and the beast, and expounded the mysteries in the previous chapter. This latter angel makes a terrible announcement: He cried mightily with a loud voice, saving, Babylon the

Great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 18:2).

Such will be Babylon: utterly devilish and unclean, given up to Satan and his hosts, because nations, kings, and merchants, through her fleshly lusts, have gratified their desires in trafficking with her. Nations drank her intoxicating wine; the kings of the

earth found her willing embrace; and merchant's heaped up riches through her aid. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies (Rev. 18:3).

How easy it is for a man to call himself a Christian, and yet in heart and soul to be of the world! How ready is man to acknowledge God with his lips, while his heart is far from Him! But God must have realities. He will have His beloved Son honored. He is the God of judgment, and by Him actions are weighed. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, and from Him no secrets are hid. How little, perhaps, do any of us think what is going on all around, through the harlot's intoxicating cup. The process may be a very gradual one in some cases; but the golden cup attracts the eye; the sparkling jewels and costly attire are strikingly alluring to the senses; and at last the bewitching cup is sipped. Its inebriating effects soon follow, and madly urge the soul to drink again the hellish mixture, which falsely promises both worlds, by utterly confusing law and gospel, Church and world, Christ and Belial. It is, indeed, a deadly poison, filling the mind with vain-glorious thoughts and self-inflated notions, while it hardens the heart against Christ, and sears the conscience as to the grace and truth of God. Hence deliberate overtures are made to the world for the sake of earthly gain and her perishing honors, and moth-eaten and corrupting treasures are most cordially embraced. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches (Psa. 73:12).

How different are the effects of drinking the cup of blessing of the precious blood of Christ! The more we drink of that cup, the more are we filled with the love of God, strengthened with might in the inner man, comforted and enlarged; we realize, too, the hollow and dissatisfying character of this guilty world, and our affections and longings of soul are drawn toward Christ, and God, and glory! While we drink of the cup of blessing, and contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God upon the tree, our very bowels are so moved toward our living, loving Jesus, that we cannot help exclaiming, -"See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down; Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown? "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my heart, my life, my all."

The testimony of this angel is followed by another voice out of heaven to God's people, for, as we have before seen, God will have a people in the earth at that time, whom He will sustain, and bring through the fiery trial, the great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21).

The voice says: Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

Notes on the Revelation

And if true, then, for saints having an earthly calling and hope, how far deeper the obligation of those who are one with a rejected Christ, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1}.

Here seems to be the peculiarly solemn bearing of these chapters on us. The book, we know, is prefaced with the promise of blessing to those who read or hear it, and keep those things which are written therein. Nothing can be plainer than the path marked out for the members of the body of Christ, of separation from all the rapidly growing principles of Babylon the Great. It is high time to move onward, in obedience to our Lord Jesus. It is pleasant and interesting to consider the various details of prophetic truth which God has so mercifully revealed; but if they do not lead us to action, may we not fear lest the light that is in us be darkness? May the Lord help us! It is very solemn to stand in the bright light of the sure word of prophecy. There is such a thing as being partakers of others' sins, and we are warned concerning it by this voice from heaven. We dare not be neutral. Neither can we act as mere individuals, for we are members of one body -- the body of Christ. We either do or do not have fellowship with sins. The sins of this harlot are very black; they are heaping up, already piled very high, and will quickly reach unto heaven, and then God's judgment must come. Are we in any wise partakers of her sins? Have we fully come out of her? God says, Come out.

Have we heard and obeyed this word of the Lord? Let us not forget that Jesus said, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings(John 14:21-24).

Let, us beloved, ponder the path of our feet. Let us search and see to what our hearts are attached. Is it really Christ we are serving? Are we giving Him His rightful place as our Lord, and acting worthy of His wondrous friendship? Are we minding earthly things? or are things above occupying our affections and desires? The iniquities of Babylon, so grievous in God's sight, are ripening for special judgment. Very soon it will be said, God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double (Rev. 18:5, 6).

Self is Babylon's prevailing principle. How unlike the meek and lowly Jesus, who pleased not Himself, but could always say, Not my will, but thine, be done {Luke 22:42}. I do always those things which please Him {John 8:29}.

The Church of God, too, is spoken of as subject unto Christ; and true discipleship consists in denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ. Babylon is not like this; -- self-love, self-seeking, self-reliance, and self-exaltation mark her, till her time of utter abasing come. Then it will be said, How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give

her; for she said in her

heart [how searching!] I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. THEREFORE shall her plagues come in one day; death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her (Rev. 18:7, 8).

When God judges, He shows Himself to be the Searcher of the heart. He knows what is underneath many a burning lip, and is able to judge righteously. And in Babylon, where there was luxuriousness and extravagance, He brings famine;

where the heart boastingly said, I shall see no sorrow,

He brings death;

and makes the one who in self-exaltation said, I sit a queen, and am no widow,

to feel the bitterness of mourning.

The suddenness, violence, and final character of the judgment are clearly pointed out. So sudden, that we are told her plagues shall come in one day {Rev. 18:8}. In one hour is thy judgment come {Rev. 18:10}; in one hour so great riches is come to nought {Rev. 18:17}; in one hour is she made desolate {Rev. 18:19}.

Like the other judgments, when men are saying, Peace and safety {1 Thess. 5:3},

then sudden destruction cometh; or, as at Belshazzar's impious feast, while the thousand lords and princes were merry with wine, praising the gods of gold and silver, and filled with the excitement of the royal revelry, in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote against the wall (Dan: 5:1-5). The violence of Babylon's desolation and destruction is shown by a mighty angel, who took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down (Rev. 18:21).

Ah, when God's wrath is kindled it will be full of fury and fiery indignation, which shall devour His adversaries. As to the final character of the judgment, this is many times alluded to in this chapter. No man buyeth their merchandise any more {Rev. 18:11}. The fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all {Rev. 18:14}.

Babylon shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee (Rev. 18:21-23).

We are elsewhere told, that her smoke rose up for ever and ever (Rev. 19:3).

Such is the fearful and everlasting doom that awaits his false system. Let us now look at the persons who had fellowship with her iniquity, and therefore received of her plagues. 1. The kings of the earth weep and wail when they see the smoke of her burning. Their misery is great, when they think of that great city, that mighty city, and the abundance of her luxuries. 2. The merchants of the earth weep and lament also, because all their flourishing traffic is suddenly at an end. The merchants . . . which were made rich by her stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping, and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! for in one hour so great riches is come to nought (Rev. 18:15-17).

3. The shipmasters and sailors and traders by sea weep too: They cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! (Rev. 18:19).

Such are some of the distresses of those who are found associated with Babylon in that day. They seem, while on this earth, to be literally weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. But we must not pass over the long list of merchandise that characterizes that great city. There are twenty-eight things enumerated, and they are arranged in seven classes. The first is a list of ornaments, -gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls {Rev. 18:12}.

The second class is costly and showy attire, -fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet {Rev. 18:12}.

The third class is elegant and costly furniture, -all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble {see Rev. 18:12}.

The fourth class is perfumery, -cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense {Rev. 18:13}.

The fifth class is food, -wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep {Rev. 18:13}.

The sixth class, splendid equipages, -horses and chariots {Rev. 18:13}.

The seventh class, men’s bodies and souls, -slaves, and souls of men {Rev. 18:13}.

It is evident that this catalogue presents what the lusts and pride of men in all nations most seek after. Gold stands at the head of the list, because that is of the most value in man’s esteem, and the souls of men at the bottom of the list, because the soul is of the least importance in man’s account. Do we not see here some of the real actings of nominal Christianity? Hence salvation is the last thing that is considered; but, with true believers, the soul stands

highest in the scale of importance, and the present possession of eternal life is the starting point. We have purple and scarlet in this list, but no blue; for blue is typical of that which is heavenly, and according to God. The blue canopy over us tells us this; and we read that the heavens declare the glory of God {Psa. 19:1}.

There is nothing of that which is above in Babylon; it is earthly, carnal, devilish, and its scarlet, like the colour of red earth, is in keeping with it. But further. In the midst of all this misery on earth, at the desolating judgment of this harlot, the heart is relieved by the mind of heaven being introduced, and its warrant for rejoicing over it all (Rev. 18:20). The true rendering of the verse is, Rejoice over her, heaven, and you saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her.

This is an important point to notice. The order is the same as in Ephesians, -- apostles and prophets, and not prophets and apostles. Had it been the latter, there might be some doubt as to whether Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets were meant. We see also that they are associated with saints exactly corresponding with those who are Christ's at His coming, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The heavenly saints, therefore, are above, while Babylon's judgment is going on in the earth; and they rejoice, while those who have been associated with the harlot, instead of with the Son of God, are weeping and wailing. All this, as we know, takes place before the Lord comes out of heaven, in flaming fire, to judge the world in righteousness. It is a blessed feature in the apocalyptic writings, that when the soul is saddened at contemplating the visions of God's judicial vengeance, we are every now and then reminded that our place is above, on thrones with the Lamb. Even now, as risen and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, we can sing, "He comes -- for oh! His yearning heart No more can bear delay -To scenes of full unmingled joy To call His bride away. This earth, the scene of all His woe, A homeless wild to thee, Full soon upon His heavenly throne Its rightful King shall see. Thou, too, shalt reign -- He will not wear His crown of joy alone! And earth His royal Bride shall see Beside Him on His throne. Then weep no more! 'tis all thine own -His crown, His joy Divine; And, greater far than all beside, HE, HE HIMSELF is thine."

With all Babylon's greatness, revelry, and mirth, the awful conclusion of her description is, that in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24).

Does not this solemn account remind us of our Lord's warning to those who profess to be His servants, and yet find companionship with the enemies of the Lord?

Notes on the Revelation But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:48-51).