

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 18

The Fall of Babylon — God's Direct Judgment

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Chapter 18 — The Fall of Great Babylon

In chapter 17 there were instruments used of God to afflict the wicked, Great Babylon, but here God Himself is seen dealing directly the judgment she had richly deserved (v.8).

Chap. 18:1-2

A mighty angel lightens up the whole scene as he announces, in a voice that none can gainsay, the awful doom of her who had used her power against the Lord's people. She who calls herself the church is degraded to Satan's level and marked out with all that is unclean and hateful in God's sight.

Chap. 18:3

There was wrath connected with her illicit commerce with the nations. She made the nations to drink, and often by force; yet too often the kings of the earth were only too glad to bow to her in order to further their own worldly aims. She is also the mother of luxury and by her were the merchants enriched.

Chap. 18:4

God is faithful and calls His people out in separation from her before judgment falls. We ought to leave whatever we discern to be Babylon in principle! This is so important that 'another voice out of heaven' is used to make this appeal and warning. May all of the Lord's people heed this word!

Chap. 18:5

God Himself alone can rightfully measure the extent of her guilt. The JND translation is very significant: 'For her sins have been heaped on one another up to heaven.'

Chap. 18:6-8

Just retribution overtakes her. She reaps as she has sown. You always reap more in quantity than what you have sown; the seed multiplies. So here when God undertakes judgment, it is complete and meets the case exactly.

Chap. 18:9-10

Those who profited by reason of her costliness mourn her (for contrast see 19:1-3).

Chap. 18:11-13

Here is set forth the long list of her merchandise which includes 'bodies and souls of men'. The word 'slaves' in verse 13 should be 'bodies'. There are 28 items enumerated which can be arranged in seven classes: (1) Ornaments — 'gold, silver, and precious stones and pearls'. (2) Costly and showy attire — 'fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet'. (3) Elegant and costly furniture — 'all thyine wood, and all manner of vessels of ivory, ...most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble'. (4) Perfumery — 'cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense'. (5) Foodstuffs — 'wine, oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts and sheep'. (6) Splendid equipages — 'horses and chariots'. (7) 'Men's bodies and souls.' How awful to realize that men's souls and bodies are bartered like so much merchandise by that wicked religious system here depicted!

Chap. 18:14-19

We are reminded of our Lord's question in Mark 8:36, 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?' Here all is lost to the false church and those that served her, for her spirit and activities reach down into every walk of life.

Chap. 18:20

No wonder then that they whose words she distorted to her own miserable use are here called upon to rejoice. The saints are also included in this verse along with apostles and prophets (see JND translation).

Chap. 18:21-23

Her judgment will be violent and sudden, and final. Never again will she lift up her head in subtle defiance of God and His truth and holiness which she had dragged in the dust. Any light that she had will go out forever (v.23). The days of her music and dancing will be gone and instead eternal woe shall be her portion.

Chap. 18:24

Cain slew Abel his brother after Abel had been accepted of God on the grounds of the death of a substitute. This has characterized all hatred of God and His people from the beginning and the whole guilt is summed up in Great Babylon (see Matt. 23:34-35).