

The Fall of Babylon – the Coming Global Empire - Part 3

Revelation 18:9-24

Will you take your Bibles and join me by turning to Revelation chapter 18. We are very slowly and carefully making our way through our Lord's precious revelation. We are committed to absorbing all of its amazing truths. This is the third and final part of our study of Revelation 18, the fall of Babylon the coming global empire.

Let me read the text that we will look at this morning beginning in verse nine.

And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more; cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.

And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?'

And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!'¹

Again we have the privilege of gazing upon the glory of Christ our Savior by examining this revelation pertaining to the coming judgment of Babylon the great, this coming world empire that will be ruled by the antichrist ultimately by Satan, a political and commercial empire that will intoxicate the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth and everyone who lives on the earth except true believers, intoxicate them with materialism, the idolatry of earthly things, the seduction of lavish lifestyles that feeds our fleshly lusts.

¹ Revelation 18:9-19.

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Man has an insatiable appetite for wealth and it produces a very deadly result. It creates the illusion that somehow we are in control, the deception of self sufficiency, the delusion of pride and a disregard for God.

This is a fitting reminder to each of us as we now enter into the Christmas holiday season as we begin to go to the malls and shop and try to avoid being trampled by others. Certainly Satan has successfully turned this sacred season into a celebration of greed and materialism cloaked in the robes of religious hypocrisy where the glorious truths of the gospel of Christ, the incarnation of Christ have all been virtually eclipsed by Santa Clause and Rudolph and Frosty the snowman and all of the superficial sentimentality about peace on earth. And today you don't even find it comfortable in many places saying merry Christmas because that is now offensive to so many. So Christ has been removed from Christmas. Well, all of this points to the type of idolatry that we will see emerge in full form when the antichrist assumes his place just before the Lord returns.

Here in Revelation 18 the angelic messenger describes this final collapse of this materialistic empire, this commercial system called Babylon the great.

Now, before we examine it, I want us to take our lives and bring our lives to the Word of God for a moment to really prepare our hearts for what the Lord has to share with us here in Revelation 18. And bear in mind that whenever we witness the judgment of others, it should lead us to humility. It should lead us to prayer. It should lead us to contrition. What a grievous error we would make to shake our heads in contempt over others who have sinned when we ourselves presume upon his grace and commit the same sins.

Now, please understand. The final world system will be characterized primarily by two things, religious hypocrisy and greed. In Revelation chapter 17 we studied a description of the religious hypocrisy that will be characteristic of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth, the false ecumenical apostate religious system led by the false prophet that will basically serve the political ambitions of the antichrist and eventually be destroyed by the antichrist when he demands that the world worship him alone. And then in Revelation 18 we see a description of greed, of greedy materialism that will basically characterize the political and the commercial aspect of this system once again called Babylon the great.

Now, for a moment hold your finger in Revelation 18 and turn over to Luke chapter 12. I want to prepare our hearts with a few thoughts of the words of Jesus when he was still on earth. In Luke 12 Jesus warned those who were learning from him, those who were following along and trying to understand who he was and considering his teachings. He says in verse one, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."² And certainly these characters were standing around listening to every word. It must have been a tense moment. Certainly Jesus knew nothing of being seeker sensitive.

² Luke 12:1.

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The Lord went on, then, to expose the great danger of self deception, specifically that of the sin of self righteousness inherent in religious hypocrisy and the certain danger of being cast into hell which will be the fate of all those who refuse to confess him before men. And he is calling on them to consider the hypocrisy and wretchedness of their own heart. And in the context of all of this suddenly in verse 13, a man blurts out of the crowd, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

And you have to pause for a moment and say, “My Goodness. Where did that come from?” This is totally incongruent with the subject at hand. This is what we would call a non sequitur. It is an illogical conclusion that did not follow the premise. It doesn’t fit. Or does it? I believe, in fact, it does.

You see, the point the Holy Spirit is wanting to make is that religious hypocrisy blinds men to the sin of greed. And, beloved, please here this. Where you find one, you will find the other. In fact, later on in chapter 16 of verse 14 of Luke Jesus says, “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money.”³ Well, this foolish man is basically saying, “Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know all this stuff about religion. Hey, I am ok with that. I am a Jew. I am a son of Abraham. I follow the law. I am a good Jew. I keep the law and so forth.”

You see, like all hypocrites he was utterly blind to the condition of his heart. He had no concern about his own spiritual destiny. He could not see his own sin. He didn’t care anything about Christ. He certainly wasn’t going to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord. He just saw him as a rabbi and rabbis typically adjudicated certain family matters and so what was really important to him is getting his fair share, material things. Evidently his brother was somehow, at least in his mind, cheating him out of his inheritance. So obviously this man was consumed with earthly treasures, not heavenly ones.

And so Jesus answers the man in verse 14 and says, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?”⁴ In other words, “This is not something I am going to deal with. This is a matter for the civil authorities.” And then notice what he says in verse 15. “Then he said to them...”⁵ In other words, he looks to the crowd and he says, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed.”⁶ In verse one beware of hypocrisy. In verse 15 beware, be on guard against every form of greed.

Beware is a command. It is a command to maintain a constant attitude of vigilance. And implied in the command is that the sin of greed is the kind of sin that we can commit unwittingly, that we can be even unaware of how subtly it impacts our lives and motivates our hearts even like we are to beware, he says, of the leaven. Or, in other words, the influence of the Pharisees. Their religious system can produce hypocrisy, self righteousness.

³ Luke 16:14.

⁴ Luke 12:14.

⁵ Luke 12:15.

⁶ Ibid.

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So he says, “Beware. Be on guard,” which means literally to look out for something, to avoid something that could bring you to ruin. And what is that? Greed. This is the sin of covetousness. This, dear friends, is a violation of the 10th Commandment. And what it refers to is a greedy desire to acquire more and more material possessions or literally to possess more things than other people have irrespective of need.

In Ephesians five the apostle Paul even connects in verse three this sin of greed with immorality and other forms of impurity which stand in stark contrast to the holiness and love of God that we are to emulate. There in Ephesians 5:3 he says, “Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you as is proper among saints.”⁷

Beloved, Scripture is clear. Hypocrites are inevitably greedy materialists. And greedy people are inevitably immoral. Now please understand the sin of greed is not determined by what a man owns. There were many very wealthy godly men that we read about in Scripture. But, you see, the sin of greed is in never being content with what you have and always wanting more.

Remember King Solomon? The wealthiest man that ever lived and the wisest man said this in Ecclesiastes 5:10. “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.”⁸ What a picture of America, of country absolutely filled with religious hypocrisy, immoral to the core and so greedy we spend more than we make to buy things that we don’t even need. We are never content, are we? We are never satisfied, always competing with the Jones.

I saw the new Ford truck the other day that will be produced in 2012, unbelievable. Hydrogen engine. I have never seen anything so beautiful in all my life. And instantly my flesh says, “I have got to have it. I have got to have it.” And you catch yourself and you realize, first of all, you can’t afford that, number one. Number two, you don’t need that. But that is how our flesh works.

I have seen young people sell their soul to buy an article of clothing so that they can look sexy or cool and somehow fit in with their peers, but it is never enough. We have got to have bigger and better. We have got to have more houses and barns to put all of our stuff. We even now have rental storage buildings to put all of our excess. When will it be enough?

According to the book *The Overspent American*, 27 percent of all households making more than 100,000 dollars a year say they cannot afford to buy everything they really need. The author states, quote, “Sport utility vehicles, lap top computers, digital cameras, electronic personal organizers and cellular telephones have all become necessities,” end quote.

⁷ Ephesians 5:3.

⁸ Ecclesiastes 5:10.

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One national survey I read says that 82 percent of Americans admit that they are materialistic and 77 percent say they are self indulgent. My, what a testimony.

Now, I might also add the sin of greed, the sin of greedy materialism is not limited to just the affluent. It is just as prevalent among the poor. Examples abound of poor people, especially illegal aliens that have become experts and somehow working the system to get more government aid and sapping church benevolent funds and other non profit community aid organizations. The recent scandal with this ACORN organization is a perfect example of this kind of greed and corruption.

So Jesus warns, “Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed for not even when a man has an abundance does his life consist of this, of his possessions.” Abundance refers to having more than what one needs. And he is saying here that your life doesn’t consist of your possessions. Life, here in the original language, refers to the essence of that which produces joy and fulfillment and purpose, the transcendent life. And he is saying this will never be a result of possessions. So lusting after them is foolishness and so he tells them this parable, then, of this rich fool who is both a religious hypocrite and a greedy materialist just like the Pharisees.

And he says in verse 16:

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'"⁹

Then he said, “This is what I will do. I will give my surplus to the poor.” It doesn’t say that, does it? “I will help the widows and the orphans. I will give unto the Lord that he might be glorified.” No, no, no, no, no. None of that. He says, “This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones.”¹⁰

Now bear in mind in those days barns were built on the unproductive ground and we tend to do that even today. And so rather than adding on to the barns and building more barns on productive ground, let’s tear these down and go maybe a little wider and a whole lot higher.

And he says:

And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."¹¹

⁹ Luke 12:16-17.

¹⁰ Luke 12:18.

¹¹ Luke 12:18-19.

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Now we might ask why all the storage? I mean, why not just sell the harvest and pocket the income, save the money. Nothing wrong with that. Maybe invest it in other things.

Well, no. You must bear in mind that the Lord here is giving an example of a greedy, materialist. You see, what is going on here is this man wants to restrict supply in order to increase demand. And what happens when that occurs? Prices will be inflated and then you sell it off and you make a lot of money.

You see, this guy is a greedy selfish weasel. He is going to fix prices by controlling supply and demand so he can get even richer. He is going to take advantage of other people. There is no thought here of being a good steward of what God has given him, no thought of giving out of his abundance to show the love of God and invest in eternity.

Notice what Jesus said:

But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.¹²

Beloved, this is a perfect picture of those who will fall prey to Satan’s schemes in the final days of Babylon the great. And we see it beginning to happen even now in our life time. As believers we are called to submit to the Lord’s command. Later on in verse 29 notice what he says in Luke 12.

And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.¹³

Now, with that as an introduction we come back to Revelation 18. Again, keep in mind. Hypocrisy and greed, twin vices, dear friends that walk hand in hand in the heart of a fool, two extremely powerful and seductive forces. And throughout history Satan has used these to damn men’s souls, to seduce men through the immaterial world of counterfeit spirituality and false religions and or the material world of pursuing the fleeting pleasures of the riches of this world.

¹² Luke 12:20-21.

¹³ Luke 12:29-34.

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So we come to Revelation 17 and 18 where the Lord unveils the judgment that will one day fall upon Babylon the great, those held captive by hypocrisy and greed, those held captive by false religion and earthly possession.

Now, as you will recall, I have divided this chapter, chapter 18, into five sections to help us understand its contents. We looked at the first three verses the first time where we studied her doom. There we read of a horrific angelic pronouncement of her demonic infestation and impending desolation. Secondly, in verses four through five, we studied her danger, a warning to believers to flee from the city and even more importantly to abandon any association with the enticements of his hypocrisy and greed. And then, thirdly, we studied her deeds, the sins of self glorification and living sensuously, finding satisfaction in joy and luxurious living rather than in God.

And, fourthly, we examine her dirge, a lament here, a song of sadness, a requiem to resurrect an old English term. It is like a funeral song.

Verse nine.

And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’¹⁴

The lament will begin by the kings or the leaders of the world who will be serving under the antichrist. And bear in mind, once again, dear friends, the chronology here.

The bowl judgments have occurred, six of them. The seventh one will basically merge into the fall of Babylon. They have just occurred. The loathsome and malignant sores upon all who worship the beast, the oceans and the fresh waters have all become toxic. Men have been scorched with the fierce heat of the sun and then the whole world has been darkened. And then the sixth bowl judgment is that the great river, the Euphrates and its water was dried up that the way might be prepared for the kings from the East.

And so by this time these kings with their massive armies will be marching towards Jerusalem to destroy the rebuilt Jewish temple and the remaining Jews will be supernaturally empowered to defend the temple mount and so forth. And they will look back across their shoulders, it says, standing at a distance and they will see the smoke of her burning. They will see the white hot glow of the fire of divine wrath that will illuminate the dark sky in a mushroom cloud of disaster whereupon the final fall of Babylon will culminate in the seventh bowl judgment which will then lead to the killing fields of Armageddon in the final hours just before the Lord returns.

¹⁴ Revelation 18:9-10.

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It is staggering, isn't it? They look upon this and they see the great symbol of their Utopian empire gone. The new world order has disappeared and so, too, has their hope. Only judgment remains.

It is sad to think about it, isn't it? They worshipped money rather than God and now they will reap what they have sown. Theirs was a false security. Theirs was a misplaced dependency in wealth and in material things. But now all of the wealth and all of the opportunity for commerce has been reduced to a glowing cloud of smoke and the cataclysmic devastation of this hellish city will be but a harbinger of what will soon befall them, probably within hours if not minutes.

Notice next the merchants of the world will realize as well the same thing, that all of the angelic warnings concerning Babylon's fall were, in fact, true. Verse 11. "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more."¹⁵

Think of it. All commerce, all trade, all economies, it is over. It is ceased. And what a fitting irony. I was thinking about this. God is now judging the very ones who earlier refused to buy or to sell to those who would not wear the mark of the beast. Suddenly the shoe is on the other foot. And next he gives a list of 28 or perhaps 29 items of merchandise that can be divided into seven categories. And we find these items in similar contexts in the Word of God, contexts where God describes judgment falling upon insolent idolaters that live extravagantly, especially the city of Tyre and Babylon and even Nineveh and so forth.

Now bear in mind that these were commodities drawn from things that were familiar to the apostle John, items which will bear much, but not complete similarity with the future day that he describes. These things were all items that in John's day produced enormous wealth among merchants and kings. Verse 12. The first category that of treasured items of wealth and extravagance. Notice, "Cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls."¹⁶ The second category, items of rich attire, "And fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet."¹⁷ And then the third category, materials for luxurious and expensive furniture and cabinetry and so forth. He says, "And every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble."¹⁸

As a footnote, citron or sometimes it is called thine wood, is a north African citrus tree. It emits a very sweet smelling odor and it has been highly prized for its beautiful colors. And especially in John's day, as one historian described it, quote, "Its use in costly doors and dining tables colored the items like the eyes of a peacock's tail, the stripes of a tiger or the spots of a panther. The price paid for one table made of this wood could have

¹⁵ Revelation 18:11.

¹⁶ Revelation 18:12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

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purchased a large estate. As the feminine mark of extravagance was pearls, that of men was their mania for citrus wood tables,” end quote.

He goes on in verse 13, the fourth category, that of rare, costly spices. He speaks of “Cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense.”¹⁹

And then a fifth category which, as we study them—and I won’t take you into the details of all of this—but this really describes the most rare and expensive kinds of food items. He speaks of, “Wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat.”²⁰ And then the sixth category, that of agricultural and domestic goods that were considered to be signs of great wealth. He speaks of, “Cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots.”²¹

By the way, chariots is a reference not just to what we would think of in the *Ben Hur* movie and in wars, but it refers to four wheeled carriages that would provide transportation especially for the wealthy. And, of course, the logical parallel for the future would be our modern luxury cars and SUVs and so forth.

And then the final items on the list, number seven, that of human trafficking. He speaks of, “Slaves and human lives.”²² People that will be used as servants, as prostitutes and even as soldiers. This inconceivably wicked and cruel practice is purposely placed at the end of the list because in the Greek language anything at the end of a list was considered to be in the emphatic position. And so this underscores what Robert Thomas rightly labels, quote, “The inhumane brutality and contempt for human life on which the city’s prosperity rests,” end quote.

Verse 14, the lament goes on. “And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.”²³ That little phrase grammatically in the original language is what is called a double negative and it is basically the most emphatic way possible in the Greek language to state a negation. In other words, what he is saying in our vernacular is this. This will never ever, ever, ever exist again. It is over.

Verse 15. “The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning.”²⁴ In other words, the party is over. What they will be saying in essence is, “All of the source of our wealth is destroyed. Our leader, our god, the antichrist, promises all of these things and we relied upon him and upon all of these resources. But now all that we have believed and hoped for is dashed to pieces by this biblical God, this despicable Lamb of God, this Christian God, this triune God that we despised and blasphemed for all of the judgments that he has poured out upon us.”

¹⁹ Revelation 18:13.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Revelation 18:14.

²⁴ Revelation 18:15.

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Next, notice how this dirge of the merchants incorporates the imagery of the harlot's attire in chapter 17 verse four with the image of the city. In verse 16 they say, "Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls..."²⁵

And if you look back in chapter 17 verse four and the description the Lord gives of the harlot Church we read, "And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality."²⁶ You see, again, the whole world by this time, dear friends, will be seduced by this blasphemous religious and commercial, political empire. And in verse 17 the merchant say, "For in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!"²⁷

I find it interesting here. The focus of their weeping and of their mourning is not over the millions who will perish in that city. It is not over even their own impending doom and the destiny of their souls. But it is over the loss of potential wealth. It is amazing, isn't it? This is truly the character, the picture of an idolater.

The apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 3:5 and also in Ephesians 5:5 as we read that greed amounts to idolatry. Christian friend, please understand something. Idolatry is an abomination to God. And an idol is anything that man makes into an object of trust. In fact, in Psalm 31:6 as well as in Jonah 2:8 the Spirit of God speaks about vain idols, literally lying vanities, empty deceptions. It is amazing. They are empty, they are vain, they are lying because people become convinced that these idols are the source of their deepest joy and they will love them more than they will love God. And it is easy for us all to fall into that trap. That is why Jesus said, "Beware, be on your guard."

You know, Satan knows the foolishness of our hearts. He is the father of lies. He is the quintessential deceiver. Think about it. He is the one who could go to Adam and Eve and present a lie to them that is infinitely implausible, the idea that if you eat of the fruit you shall be as gods. And yet they fell for it.

Now, these were not stupid people. How could they fall for it? Certainly not because it is plausible, not because it is reasonable and it is credible and it is compelling. No, they fell for it because it was appealing to their flesh. Remember, they thought, oh, it is good for food, pleasant to the eyes, to be desired to make one wise.

Doug Bookman says, and I quote, "In short, a lie is powerful not because it is deceptive, but because it is delicious," end quote.

²⁵ Revelation 18:16.

²⁶ Revelation 17:4.

²⁷ Revelation 18:17.

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You see, herein is the great power of greed that will cause men to worship material things. Man becomes convinced that real life is found in his possessions. Bookman goes on to say, quote, “A lie is effective only because of our selfish predisposition, because as fallen creatures we are so bent upon pandering to our own desires that we will render ourselves so spiritually foolish as to obey a lie we would never consciously affirm. But that selfish predisposition is in every case destructive. When people determine to abandon what they know to be the truth in order to embrace a beguiling lie, they forsake God’s mercy,” end quote.

What a tragedy, a tragedy with eternal consequences. Well, the dirge of the kings and the merchants continues with those who will make their living upon the great oceans of the world. Of course, by this time they have all become toxic, impossible to navigate.

Verse 17.

And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’²⁸

What a testimony to the power of idolatry and the utter deceitfulness of sin, the great city? What an empty delusion. It is all vanity. As we read in Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”²⁹

It seems right. Oh, here is life. Here is where I can find life. And some deceitful works righteousness religious system where I can somehow elevate myself to God, where the scales of divine justice will tilt in my favor because of all my good deeds. And, oh, look at all the life that I can find in all of these things. How can I get more?

Well, we have seen the doom of Babylon the great, the danger, the deeds and the dirge. Finally, her destruction in verse 20. And, obviously, here in verse 20 and obviously here the attitude of the redeemed is radically different than the beast worshippers on earth. There we read, “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”³⁰

You see, at last the prayers of the saints are being answered. Remember the prayers, especially of the martyred saints during the time of the tribulation that we read about in chapter six verses nine and 10, the fifth seal judgment? The exaltation of the faithful now is in response to the angel’s call to rejoice over her. Why? Because God has pronounced

²⁸ Revelation 18:17-19.

²⁹ Proverbs 14:12.

³⁰ Revelation 18:20.

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judgment for you against her. Rejoice because now the righteousness and the glory of God will be revealed.

Again, it is fascinating. The same verb translated “rejoice over her” was used earlier to describe the elation of the wicked over the deaths of the two witnesses. Once again, the shoe is now on the other foot.

Verse 21. “And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.’”³¹ Here another angel appears on the scene and provides this graphic demonstration of the utter destruction of the city. Suddenly, violently this great city, this capital city of the antichrist empire, this great symbol of wickedness upon the earth will disappear.

And to further depict her desolation the angel describes the silence that will replace the noise of her wickedness in verse 22. “And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer.”³²

Think about it. All the music will cease forever. Any news from the musicians to the craftsmen. He says, “And no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer.”³³ In other words, all trades, all manufacturing, all commerce will disappear.

Verse 23. “And the light of a lamp...”³⁴ This is a reference to even the smallest, tiniest form of light, “And the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer.”³⁵ Complete darkness. “And he voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer.”³⁶ In other words, life as usual is over, no more marriages, no more reproduction. “For your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”³⁷ **PHARAKEIA** (far-mak-i’-ah) in the original language. It is a reference to magical arts and sorcery like that you will recall that Jezebel used in 2 Kings 9:22. It is spoken of even in the context of ancient Babylon in Isaiah 47:12.

You see, this point to the fact that this city which we have already been told will be absolutely infested with demons, that this city will fall prey to some form of demonic quackery and sorcery that will deceive them and seduce them into the immoral blasphemous and idolatrous relationships that they will have with her.

³¹ Revelation 18:21.

³² Revelation 18:22.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Revelation 18:23.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

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Verse 24. “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”³⁸ Ultimately divine justice will come upon all of that city, all the people in that city, this cruel city because of the blood of the saints that they have spilt on the ground and those that they have slaughtered.

What a contrast to the Lord’s promise to Israel, his covenant people, the restoration of Israel when he comes in all of his glory and he establishes his long promised millennial earthly kingdom. We read of this in so many places, but I think of the one stated in Jeremiah 33 beginning at verse 10.

Thus says the LORD, ‘Yet again there will be heard in this place, of which you say, "It is a waste, without man and without beast," that is, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting"; and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were at first,’ says the LORD.³⁹

He goes on in verse 14:

‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.’⁴⁰

Dear friends, what a glorious and holy God we serve, one who will one day avenge his righteousness and bring justice to this old world. And with the fall of Babylon and the slaughter at Armageddon the Lord will then appear in all of his glory which will be the theme of the next chapter, Revelation 19.

As we close this morning may I challenge you? When you go shopping this Christmas and prepare for the wonderful celebrations that are so appropriate and good to have with our families, celebrations associated with the incarnation of Christ and the gospel of Christ and all that that means to those of us who have been saved by his grace, I would encourage you to enjoy all of the good things that God has given us.

But, beloved, beware, be on guard for the sin of greed. Be content with what you have.

³⁸ Revelation 18:24.

³⁹ Jeremiah 33:10-11.

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 33:14-16.

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And also look around at all of the people doing all of their things and realize that most of these people will enter into a Christless eternity and God has called us to give them the gospel. Look for opportunities and what a great opportunity during the Christmas season when people are already predisposed to think about the incarnation of Christ even though it is politically incorrect and we don't want to think about it.

It is funny how it is there, isn't it? It is everywhere. No matter how Satan and his system tries to eviscerate the truths of Christ it is everywhere. Take advantage of it.

But also as you look around at this orderly system controlled by Satan that opposes God and that seduces and damns men's souls, remember, beloved, that all of this is passing away. Remember that you have been saved out of all of this. We have been transferred out of this kingdom of darkness into this wonderful kingdom of light. And I pray that you will keep the words of the apostle Paul in your mind. And I want to close with what he said in 1 Timothy six beginning in verse six.

But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.⁴¹

And then in verse 10 he says.

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.⁴²

My friend, I hope for all of you who are within the sound of my voice that you have truly placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the glorious good news of the gospel of Christ, that God in his infinite love would provide a way for we as sinful men and women to be reconciled unto himself by sending his Son to live a perfect life, to voluntarily die upon a cross as our substitute, taking upon himself our sin and giving to us his righteousness.

Oh, I hope today you will see the wretchedness of your own sin if you have never seen it before and I hope today will be the day that you fall before the cross and cry out to the Savior, "Oh, Lord Jesus, forgive my sins. Save me. I confess you as my Savior and Lord today."

Let's pray together.

⁴¹ 1 Timothy 6:6.

⁴² 1 Timothy 6:10-12.

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Father, we rejoice in our Word that gives us such clarity. It gives us an understanding of your nature and your glorious attributes and the hope that is ours in Christ. I pray that you will take what we have heard today and cause it to bear much fruit in our lives, that you may receive all of the glory. We ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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