



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Burn Notice"

18:1-8

Introduction

In chapter seventeen you learned that the ancient religion of Babylon is a system of false religion that has continued to influence cultures throughout human history. In a time future to John, that system of false religion would dominate kings and kingdoms from its headquarters in Rome and it would take the lead in the brutal persecution and murder of the true saints of Jesus on the earth. In a time yet future to us, that system of false religion will again dominate kings and kingdoms from its headquarters in Rome and it will again take the lead in the brutal persecution and murder of the true saints of Jesus on the earth.

Now, in chapter eighteen, you learn that Babylon is not just a religious system; it is *also* a rebuilt city. It will be the commercial and cultural center of the world at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The city of Babylon *will* indeed be rebuilt in the Last Days before Jesus returns to earth.

- The prophet Isaiah, for example, in chapters thirteen and fourteen describes how the city of Babylon will be destroyed and then never

again be inhabited. He tells you that this will happen in the Last Days, during the yet future Day of the Lord.

- The prophet Jeremiah, in chapters fifty and fifty-one, confirms this same scenario: the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and destroyed in the yet future Day of the Lord.

I should tell you that not everyone agrees that Babylon will be rebuilt on its original site. Some believe that “Babylon” is the spiritual name applied to some other city - like Rome. And Christians do sometimes refer to wicked cities as “Babylon.”

We prefer this more literal approach for the Scriptural reasons we alluded to a moment ago.

Our text in the Revelation of Jesus Christ looks forward to this yet future building and burning of the city of Babylon. As you read through it, two reactions emerge toward God's burning of Babylon:

- There are those who are described as *weeping* at Babylon's burning.
- There are those who are described as *worshipping* at Babylon's burning.

The weepers are nonbelievers who love the world; the worshippers are believers who love not the world.

The whole world is a Babylon to those of us who are looking forward to the city whose builder and maker is God. As we learn about the future city of Babylon we can glean spiritual insight into the world and how we can love not the world as we make progress on our pilgrim journey home.

Revelation 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

“After these things” means that this is a further, later revelation from that of chapter seventeen. There we saw religious Babylon dominate the nations up til the half-way point in the Great Tribulation. The city

of Babylon will go on into the second half of the Great Tribulation after the “beast,” the antichrist, overthrows religion and demands to be worshipped as god.

“Another angel,” meaning another of the same kind. Definitely an angel and not the Lord Himself.

“Having great authority” reminds us that God delegates tasks to these trustworthy messengers. All the times they appear in Scripture they faithfully carry-out their assigned duties. They sometimes do a little something ‘extra.’ When Zacharias questioned the angel’s declaration that Elizabeth would yet bear a son, the angel took the liberty to strike Zacharias dumb until John the Baptist was born.

This angel illuminates the earth with his glory. It reminds us that so much is veiled to our perception now. We walk by faith and not by sight. It will be great in the future to behold things as they are, with unveiled senses. But for now blessed are we who believe without seeing.

Revelation 18:2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

The angel announces what the rest of the chapter will describe - the burning of Babylon by God in the Last Days just before Jesus Christ returns to the earth.

The repetition of “is fallen” indicates a sudden event that, although yet future, is certain to occur. I like to continually point out that we as a race will not save ourselves through science or society. We are reading the inevitable outcome of human history. God is redeeming all of creation back to Himself and it must follow the prescribed course.

Apparently Babylon will be used as a prison to incarcerate demons during the one thousand year reign of the Lord. God has a prison system for demons. In Second Peter 2:4 you read,

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

Then in Jude 1:6 you read,

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

"Cast down to hell" in Second Peter 2:4, is from the verb *tartaroo*, translated Tartarus. It signifies to consign to Tartarus, a place which is neither Sheol nor Hades nor Hell, but the place where those angels whose especially heinous sin is referred to in that passage are confined.

Earlier in the Revelation we read about a place called the Abyss. Demons were let out from there to plague the earth.

The reference to "every unclean and hated bird" might be a metaphoric way of describing demons. More likely it is describing the reality that, after its destruction, Babylon will be overrun by scavenger birds.

Revelation 18:3 "For all the 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 become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

Merchants, merchandise and luxury are themes that repeat throughout this chapter. Babylon will have all that the world can offer in terms of pleasures and possessions.

The vast holdings of the ecumenical religious system defeated by the antichrist will be absorbed by him and infused into Babylon. It will be a place of unprecedented wealth.

Future Babylon will be the richest city in the world. Today that distinction belongs to Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates. The emirate's 420,000 citizens, who sit on one-tenth of the planet's oil

and have almost \$1 trillion invested abroad, are worth about \$17 million apiece. Listen to this, from Fortune Magazine:

Khaldoon Khalifa al Mubarak is a man in a hurry. The 31-year-old, American-educated developer steps on the gas of his silver Audi and zooms past a hole in the ground crawling with construction workers - the future home of a \$1.3 billion complex featuring three skyscrapers, two five-star hotels, and a souk. The car zips by a new \$3 billion hotel that boasts 1,002 Swarovski crystal chandeliers and a gold-leaf dome larger than the one atop St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In the distance, glittering in the aqua-blue Persian Gulf, are dozens of islands that will one day sprout skyscrapers, hotels, museums, hospitals, and factories financed in part by the government-owned investment company that Khaldoon runs, Mubadala Development. In all, plans call for almost \$200 billion to be spent here over the next ten years.¹

We'll see a bit later that future Babylon will be the most sinful city in the world. What about today?

I ran across an interesting research article that listed the traditional seven deadly sins and chose a city that was most noted for each of them. It's not scientific but it is interesting.

1. Greed - Zurich, Switzerland, because of their liberal banking regulations.
2. Gluttony - Amsterdam, Netherlands, because you can legally gorge yourself on almost every physical pleasure.
3. Pride - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, because of their vanity and body consciousness that makes plastic surgery as common as a haircut.
4. Envy - Las Vegas, Nevada, because it emulates so many other cities and locales.
5. Lust - Pattaya, Thailand, because there are more 'sex workers' there per square mile than anywhere else on the planet.
6. Sloth - Memphis, Tennessee, because it won the titles of America's "Most Obese" and "Most Sedentary," with 65% of the population overweight.

¹ http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2007/03/19/8402357/index.htm

7. Wrath - Caracas, Venezuela, because according to *Foreign Policy* magazine, Caracas tops the list of the top five murder capitals of the world with a shocking official tally of 130 homicides per 100,000 residents. The situation is so bad a special police "tourist brigade" has been created to escort tourists through town.

Looking just at the United States the list reads like this:

1. Greed - San Jose, CA, because of the sheer number of million- and billionaires.
2. Gluttony - Memphis, TN, because of the aforementioned propensity for obesity.
3. Pride - Salt Lake City, UT, because there are six plastic surgeons per 100,000 people. It ranked fifth most lustful and seventh most envious.
4. Envy - Memphis, TN, because of the statistical rate of property crimes per 100,000 population.
5. Lust - Denver, CO, because their contraceptive sales are 189% of the average. Denver also ranked as the fourth most greedy city.
6. Sloth - Memphis, TN, because residents average 41 hours of TV viewing daily and 30% of the population do not exercise regularly. Memphis ranks in the top ten of every sin!
7. Wrath - Detroit, MI, because of its stats in all crime categories.

The antichrist's Babylon will be all of these world and U.S. cities rolled into one.

It sort of reminds me of Pleasure Island in the classic animated film, Pinocchio. After the boys have their fun with all manner of vices, they are turned into donkeys and sold into slavery.

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

The purpose of separation from Babylon is twofold:

1. So as to not partake of the spiritual sins that are so prevalent.

2. So as to not be affected physically by the judgment that is prescribed.

It's highly unlikely that a believer would be taken in by any of the false teachings of the religious system called Babylon in chapter seventeen. But commercial Babylon, cultural Babylon, materialistic Babylon is a great temptation. Like Lot being lured towards Sodom believers in the Great Tribulation must be warned.

I'm quite serious when I suggest that you avoid certain cities. If it's up to you, if you have the choice, then avoid sinful cities. Las Vegas is not on any of the lists but it could be. Look, it is not a family-friendly place. Yes, there are family venues and activities. But you cannot get to them without being exposed to all manner of pornography.

The National Middle School Association, based in Ohio, is an organization for professionals in middle school education. Their 2009 convention is in Vegas. Personal opinion: It shouldn't be there!

Revelation 18:5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

The word "reached" is interesting. It's the word you would use to describe bricks being piled one on top of the other. Sound familiar? The original Tower of Babylon was the first structure ever made of bricks! What Babylon is really made of is sin piled high.

When you seek the pleasures and possessions of the world apart from God, you are building a life in rebellion to God as you pile sin upon sin.

The people of God should not be in Babylon; those that are should come out of her. God is about to burn the city. It's reminiscent of the angel's warning Lot to leave Sodom just before God was going to burn it.

Revelation 18:6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.

The normal law of retribution is here doubled because of the enormity of Babylon's sin.

Revelation 18:7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

"Lived luxuriously" translates to *wanton* and means without limitation. It comes from an original root meaning *hardheaded*. These nonbelievers are willfully disobeying God and living large in this life despite all the warnings and pleading to get saved.

We can get so discouraged in our struggle against the world. Nonbelievers seem to prosper, having this world's good and goods, while we struggle along. In this life and especially in the next sin pays its wages.

The singer and psalmist Asaph had this problem. Listen to him in Psalm seventy-three.

Psalms 73:1 A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.

Psalms 73:2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.

Psalms 73:3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psalms 73:4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm.

Psalms 73:5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men.

Psalms 73:6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment.

Psalms 73:7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish.

Psalms 73:8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily.

Psalms 73:9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth.

Psalms 73:10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them.

Psalms 73:11 And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Psalms 73:12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.

Psalms 73:13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.

Psalms 73:14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.

Psalms 73:15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

Psalms 73:16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me -

Psalms 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.

Psalms 73:18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

Psalms 73:19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

Don't envy those who are living large now. In the sanctuary, with God, see their end. See your reward.

Revelation 18:8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day; death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

God will burn the city in one day. Sudden destruction is breathtaking. It is overwhelming. We tend to blame God for every catastrophe. Be careful! Today is the day of grace. In the future, yes, He goes on record telling you the destruction is from His hand. But not before He has shared His heart and sought to save lost mankind.

Here is an interesting geologic note. The original building site of Babylon is known to be full of bitumen, a substance filled with hydrocarbons and therefore highly flammable. As God sends fire down from heaven, the very foundations upon which Babylon will be built will burn.

A lot of these nuggets, like Babylon being built on bitumen, turn out to be false. I like to research as much as possible. This one seems to be accurate.²

“For strong is the Lord who judges her.” Our God is strong. Today His strength is often revealed and made perfect in my weakness! The nonbeliever ought to envy you and I. Without this world’s good or goods, we have peace and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

² <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1692448>