



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"The Great Babylonian Smokeout"

18:9-24

Introduction

Is it still popular among Christians to say of the world and everything in it, "It's all going to burn?" I remember a client of ours at the title company I worked for in San Bernardino. He bought a Lamborghini. He let my boss take it for a drive. They offered to let me drive it but I refused. Not because I was so spiritual, however! It was, like, three inches off the ground and it took ten minutes just to get out the driveway without bottoming it out! I didn't want to embarrass myself.

Later, though, talking to some of the other employees I told them, "It's going to burn!" It's how we referred to the things in the world that had no eternal value.

I think it was more of an attitude check than anything else. If you started to lust after something you could check yourself by reminding yourself of its future.

In the future God is going to burn Babylon. It's a controlled burn and will have many spectators.

Revelation 18:9 "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

Revelation 18:10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

The city is described as a mistress to all the “kings of the earth.” They ought to have been faithfully serving their own constituency but were busy with extracurricular immoral activities.

Recently we witnessed the downfall of the governor of New York. Eliot Spitzer resigned after being exposed as a client for a call-girl ring.

The difference in future Babylon will be no one will care because nothing will be shameful.

Even after God burns Babylon, and does so in a way that makes it clear He is the One judging her from Heaven, they will “weep and lament for her.” Really, their weeping and lamenting if for what they will miss from her.

What will they miss?

Revelation 18:11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

Babylon will be a commercial hub for the rest of the world. “Merchants” from all over the “earth” will supply her.

You probably have a favorite vacation destination. You might have several since you usually cannot do everything you would like in one place.

In the future, during the Great Tribulation, the city of Babylon will be rebuilt. It is described for us in chapter eighteen of the Revelation as the commercial and cultural center of the world. It will be the ultimate end times hot spot for just about anything the world has to offer.

Some of Babylon's commerce is listed:

Revelation 18:12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

Revelation 18:13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

It's like the various departments of a department store:

- Jewelry - "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls..."
- Clothing - "fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet..."
- Home Furnishings - "every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble..."
- Cosmetics - "cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense..."
- Food Court - "wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep..."
- Automotive - "horses and chariots..."

Then there is an Adults Only department: "bodies and souls of men." Think in terms of pornography and prostitution.

By the way, often these practices are called 'victimless crimes.'

There is no such thing as a victimless crime.

- The folks selling themselves are being treated as property, not people.
- The folks who enjoy treating others that way are harming themselves spiritually if not physically.

It isn't how God intended for us to live. It isn't living.

Revelation 18:14 The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

Literally, “the fruits of the desire of thy soul.” The word rendered “fruits” means *late summer*. In the East this is the season when the fruits ripen, and hence the word comes to denote fruit. The reference is to any kind of fruit that would be brought for traffic into a great city, and that would be regarded as an article of luxury.

It reads almost like a eulogy at a funeral. The merchants are eulogizing the city of Babylon.

Revelation 18:15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

“At a distance” reads, to me, as close as possible. When I lived in Southern California my childhood home in the foothills was threatened by wildfires. There is a morbid fascination with watching the fire advance and waiting as long as possible to evacuate.

The “merchants” care only about their profits. The effect of some of their merchandise on people is overlooked.

Profits over people is too often the case. A recent report¹ summarized a year long investigation of over 10,000 pages of previously secret internal tobacco company documents, mainly from Philip Morris and British American Tobacco, who combined share most of the market share in Latin America and the Caribbean. A couple of highlights:

- The tobacco companies hired scientists throughout the region to misrepresent the science linking secondhand smoke to serious diseases, while cloaking in secrecy any connection of these scientists with the tobacco industry.

¹ <http://www.globalhealth.org/sources/view.php3?id=663>

- They designed "youth smoking prevention" campaigns and programs primarily as public relations exercises aimed at deterring meaningful regulation of tobacco marketing.
- They had detailed knowledge of smuggling networks and markets and actively sought to increase their share of the illegal market by structuring marketing campaigns and distribution routes around it; and
- They enjoyed access to key government officials and succeeded in weakening or killing tobacco control legislation in a number of countries.

Revelation 18:16 and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!

Revelation 18:17 For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance

Revelation 18:18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

A "shipmaster" can be the shipowner or the helmsman. Next, a literal translation of the Greek is "and every one who sails to a place." It means *every voyager*. It can be a merchant or a passenger. Think cruise lines! Third, the "sailors" are those who make up the crew of a ship, and last, there are the people who gain their living from the sea by fishing, ferrying passengers, or building ships.

Babylon's influence upon world commerce is extensive. It may be only one city but its fall ruins the world's shipping industry.

Remember I told you that not everyone believes Babylon will be rebuilt on its ancient site. Among their arguments is that Babylon is not a seaport so why all the talk about merchants and the sea?

It's a weak argument. Even inland cities depend on port cities to initially receive their goods.

Revelation 18:19 "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

The custom of throwing "dust," or earth, upon the head is ancient. In Genesis it is connected to the fall of man:

- The serpent who tempted Adam and Eve is cursed to "eat dust."
- Adam is told he must toil and sweat for his food until he returns to the dust from which he was formed.

It seems poetic that men who put all their emphasis on this world now cover themselves with its dust.

Skip verse twenty for a moment.

Revelation 18:21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

This is a purely symbolic gesture. There was obviously no human way possible to retrieve such a millstone cast into the depth of the ocean. This, then, is the final destruction of Babylon.

It's an important point to make because Isaiah and Jeremiah reference a total destruction of Babylon. But when? We say in the future, during the Great Tribulation. Babylon has not yet been so utterly and totally destroyed. It's one reason we believe it will be rebuilt in the future.

We said at the beginning that future Babylon would also be a cultural center. You see that next.

Revelation 18:22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore.

Music and art and fine cuisine is being described here. What we commonly refer to as culture. Obviously it, too, will cease once Babylon is burned. John lists it here to further emphasize the sheer worldliness of Babylon.

Revelation 18:23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

It will be lights-out for Babylon. Perhaps something more is indicated. The reference to “the light of a lamp” would, in John’s day, mean a feast or party - like a wedding reception. Babylon will be a favored vacation destination for honeymooners and vacationers of all sorts.

Something weird is added: “For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.” “Sorcery” is *pharmakea*, or drugs.

I wonder just how medicated people will be in the Great Tribulation? We are dangerously overmedicated now:

- According to one child psychologist², psychiatrists are now misdiagnosing and overmedicating children for ordinary defiance and misbehavior.

The temper tantrums of belligerent children are increasingly being characterized as psychiatric illnesses. Some psychiatrists speculate that this stunning increase in childhood psychiatric disease is entirely due to improved diagnostic techniques. But setting aside the children with legitimate mental illnesses who must have psychiatric medications to function normally, much of the increase in prescribing such medications to kids is due to the widespread use of psychiatric diagnoses to explain away the results of poor parenting practices. According to psychiatrist Jennifer Harris, quoted in the January/February issue of *Psychotherapy Networker*, “Many clinicians find it easier to tell parents their child has a brain-based disorder than to suggest parenting changes.”

² <http://livingness.com/?p=4>

- Admittedly biased, but nevertheless informative, the authors at NaturalNews.com write:³ Over recent years, we in the U.S. have become accustomed to the seemingly never-ending parade of prescription drug commercials on television. Would it surprise you to learn that the pharmaceutical industry not only targets Americans directly in this fashion, but also allocates approximately \$25,000 per doctor per year?

One problem the drug companies had to overcome was the fact that they can't advertise for diagnoses that aren't FDA prescribed. So, there has been a huge expansion of diagnoses over the last 60 years. In the 1950s there were 50-60 diagnoses recognized by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The most recent count came in at over 300. One example of a relatively new diagnosis is "Adjustment Disorder." This disorder is defined as essentially having a difficult time adjusting to a major life change. There also are categories such as "phase of life problem" and "sibling relational problem." Admittedly, these can be very painful issues. They are not mental illnesses, however.

To say that mental stress will be a problem in the Great Tribulation is an understatement. I think everyone will be overmedicated with sophisticated psychotropics drugs!

Accuse me of seeing signs of the end times everywhere but the current, recent explosion of diagnoses and medications is, in itself, a sign we are approaching the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

This could mean that Babylon was somehow central in ordering the persecution of believers and nonbelievers who nevertheless defied the antichrist.

But there might be something more. It says "in her was found." Could it be that in future Babylon executions will take place for those

³ <http://www.NaturalNews.com/z023363.html>

who refuse the beast's mark - who refuse to worship him? Possibly... Probably.

Let's return to verse twenty:

Revelation 18:20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

You've got to be joyful seeing God moving forward with His plan to redeem the earth. When Babylon falls, you are close to the Second Coming of the Lord.

Interesting wording: "Heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets." Why just these?

I'm not sure but it suggests something to me. To the church at Ephesus Paul said,

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of **the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

Ephesians 2:22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

So you have the church, the apostles and the prophets. In our verse in the Revelation you have "Heaven... apostles and prophets."

Could "Heaven" be referring to the church, in Heaven watching these events? Sure!

It's not proof of the pretribulation rapture but it fits the context.