

CONCERNING THE WAY

August 25, 2009

LESSON 71: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



Chapter 17 – The Great Prostitute and The Beast

In chapter 16 we saw the pouring out of the final seven judgments, and the final consummation of God's wrath, which brought us to the end of the Great Tribulation. Now in the next few chapters John is given more details of some of these judgments, including the defeat of Antichrist and his armies and the binding of Satan in chapters 19 and 20. There is also more information about Babylon, which was mentioned the first time in Revelation 14:8 when one of the angels gives an announcement that she has fallen. Chapters 17 and 18 are mostly about this mysterious entity.

In chapter 12 Israel is portrayed as a woman clothed with the sun who gives birth to Jesus. In chapter 19 which we'll study next lesson, the Church is portrayed as a woman clothed in linen, clean and bright, who will marry Jesus. In this chapter Babylon the Great is portrayed as a woman clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. Babylon is a harlot; Israel and the Church are good women. However, Babylon also has a double identity. She is a bad woman, but she is also a city who makes others rich. Chapter 17 and 18 describe the fall of the woman/city.

Babylon is seen in the Old Testament as the religious harlot. From Babel on, false religions and other satanic activity started in Babylon and spread around the world. Babylon is the mother of all false and apostate religions. Her daughters talk about love and peace, but none of them love Jesus, and none of them talk about peace with God through Jesus. So this wicked woman seems to represent the false one world religion that will arise with the beast and the false prophet during the Tribulation.

Revelation 17:1-2 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke to me. "Come," he said, "I will show you the condemnation and punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, (2) with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality and the earth's inhabitants got drunk with the wine of her immorality."

The great prostitute is associated with Babylon (Revelation 17:5, 18, 18:21, 19:2). It speaks of the fact that this city was the origin and influence of all spiritual idolatry. The judgment of Babylon was a major prophetic theme in the Old Testament, with both Isaiah and Jeremiah speaking a lot about it (Isaiah 13, 14, 47, Jeremiah 50, 51). And like we have seen before in Old Testament prophecy, there is usually a mix of near-term and far-future predictions. Some of those prophecies were fulfilled in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus (Daniel 5:30-31), but the city has never been destroyed as Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted.

The "many waters" could be partially referring to the fact that the Euphrates River actually flowed through Babylon and it was surrounded by canals. Jeremiah also says this about Babylon:

Jeremiah 51:13 O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your end.

However, we are actually told the meaning of "many waters" in verse 15. It is "peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages". Sitting on the nations speaks of the tremendous influence this city has in the world. The kings and peoples of the earth have committed sexual immorality (or "fornication") with her (also Jeremiah 51:7).

“To prostitute something is to take that which has a proper use and to turn it into an improper use. A prostitute takes sex, which has a proper use, and perverts it with an improper use, turning it into something illicit, causing fornication. In this case, the harlot represents “religion,” which has a proper use (Jas. 1:26-27), but here has been prostituted for improper use. Rather than serving, it rules. The false use of religion causes spiritual fornication. The word fornication is used both of physical unfaithfulness and also of spiritual unfaithfulness, as in Hosea 1-2; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-9; Ezekiel 16:15-41; 23:5-44, etc. It is with this woman that the kings of the earth commit fornication (Rev. 17:2), showing this to be a unity of religion and state.” Arnold Fructenbaum

Revelation 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit to a wilderness, and there I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

In 4:2 John was carried to heaven to witness what was going on there. Here he is carried to a wilderness, where he will witness what will happen to Babylon. Later he will be carried to a high mountain where he will be shown the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10).

The woman is this prostitute, which we’re told definitively in verse 18, and she’s riding what? The beast with ten horns and seven heads should ring a bell for you – that’s the Antichrist (13:1). And his red color identifies him with the dragon Satan, who also has the same number of heads and horns (Revelation 12:3, 13:2). The fact that she is riding him does not necessarily mean she is controlling him, but could imply that he is supporting her. The beast also represents all of the kingdoms in history that have been empowered by the dragon, so the woman (false religion) has ridden the beast throughout history.

Revelation 17:4 Now the woman was dressed in purple and scarlet clothing, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She held in her hand a golden cup filled with detestable things and unclean things from her sexual immorality.

Her dress would seem to represent wealth and commercialism. It’s interesting to note that the Vatican Bank is the richest bank in the world; no one even knows how much money they have. The most luxurious city ever constructed is Rome. The Vatican, if you were to put a value on all the gold, silver, marble, works of art, etc, would number in the trillions of dollars. It has been, and still is the most influential city in the world.

“I have found this about religion. The more false a religion is, usually the more wealth it has. And the more true a religion is, usually the less material things it has. And it doesn’t seem to care about it. And I’ve seen the Christian church become poverty stricken spiritually as they have become wealthy materially.” Hal Lindsey

The golden cup is what she offers to the nations (Jeremiah 51:7, Revelation 14:8, 18:6). Like the Pharisees in Jesus’ day, the outside of the cup is beautiful, but the inside is “**full of greed and self-indulgence**” (Matthew 23:25). What are the “detestable things and unclean things”? It is obviously anything connected with idolatry, but Deuteronomy may give us some more insight:

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, you must not learn the abhorrent practices of those nations. (10) There must never be found among you anyone who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, anyone who practices divination, an omen reader, a soothsayer, a sorcerer, (11) one who casts spells, one who conjures up spirits, a practitioner of the occult, or a necromancer. (12) Whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD and because of these detestable things the LORD your God is about to drive them out from before you.

The next verse in Revelation says that she is the Mother of all these things, which means they all have their source, their beginnings in her:

Revelation 17:5 On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the Great, the Mother of prostitutes and of the detestable things of the earth."

OK, this is a good place to discuss just who this entity is. There are different interpretations, and I think this is another of these things that we just cannot know for sure until we're living in that time. There are great trustworthy Bible scholars on different sides of this issue. Here are some of the most popular views:

1. It is the actual historical city of Babylon rebuilt at some point in the future
2. It is the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church in general (probably the most popular view)
3. It is Jerusalem (generally a preterist view)
4. It is no specific place, but pagan and apostate religion in general throughout history
5. It is the world in general at the time of the end
6. It is some other city in history, even New York City!

The Jerusalem view is not in any way supported by scripture, but just a presupposition of those who don't believe in a literal Millennial Kingdom (amillennialists), and those who believe that the Church has replaced Israel in the plan of God.

It should be noted that all of the early church fathers believed that future Babylon was the Roman Empire. The reformers and the puritans all believed Babylon should be interpreted as Rome, also, except they extended it to being about Papal Rome in the last days, the Roman Catholic Church.

Almost all of the godly monks in the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, and there were some of those, as they witnessed the evil and gross immorality at the highest levels, wrote that the Catholic Church was the prostitute spoken of here in Revelation. Now that doesn't make it true just because all these people said it, but it is something to consider.

I'm not going to say that the Catholic Church has always been mystery Babylon, the whore of Revelation. But certainly there have been aspects of it in their history, and continue to this day. These monks and reformers were railing against the paganism that had become so much a part of the church, with the departure from the scriptures, the idolatry and immorality that was a regular part of the religion, and they were absolutely right about that.

I believe that the Babylon here in Revelation 17 represents the false one world religion that comes about at the beginning of the Tribulation, a mixture of Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and all other religions. You can see the push for this getting stronger and stronger today. Many people are organizing groups that include people of all faiths, crying for unity among all religions. Their goal is to take what is common among all religions and unify on those things. They believe that there will be no peace in the world until this happens.

Babylon, as we will see in a later verse, is also a real city. Could it be Rome? Mecca? Or is it a literal rebuilt city of Babylon on the Euphrates River? This would be the most normal reading of all the scriptures that have to do with Babylon. It may seem hard to believe that this could happen, that Babylon could be rebuilt and become an important city again. Today Babylon is still mostly in ruins. Saddam Hussein's attempt to rebuild Babylon was stopped by the American invasion, and he was really only doing it for his own ego (he saw himself as the new Nebuchadnezzar) and as a tourist destination. Babylon has absolutely no significance in the Islamic religion. They have no interest in rebuilding ancient pagan sites.

We see that the name of this Babylon is a mystery, something unknowable by man unless and until revealed by God. The mystery has to do with her identity and possibly her relationship to the beast. And the angel will reveal something of this mystery to us in these two chapters. I should mention that in some translations (like the King James) you will see the word “mystery” capitalized, as if it’s part of the title. That is a poor translation; there is no reason for them to do that. Her title is NOT “Mystery Babylon”, but some still call her by that name.

“The name was the name, not of a woman, but of a city, “that great city,” even Babylon. But it signified not merely the material city as such, but the vast system of idolatry connected with it. That is why the explanation of the secret sign follows “the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth.” Not merely of Rome, or even Babylon (as a city), but “of the earth” : i.e., the mother, or fountain head of all the systems of idolatry which have since flooded “the earth” from that one great source; and of which Romanism is only a part. This is the secret or “mystery of iniquity” referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Babylon was the fountain-head of all idolatry.” E. W. Bullinger

“To say that [the Harlot] is either Rome or the Roman Catholic Church is to grossly underestimate the age-long global impact of this great mystery. Babylon the Great. Babylon is the mother of all harlots and abominations of the earth. From her have come ancient paganism, Chinese Confucianism, Asian Buddhism, Indian Hinduism, Shamanism, Taoism, Shintoism, animism, astrology, witchcraft, spiritism, Sikhism, and all the world’s vast complex of “gods many, and lords many” (1 Corinthians 8:5). Of more direct concern in twentieth-century America is the direct descent of modern scientism and evolutionary humanism from this ancient mother of harlots. As noted before, modern evolutionism is in no way scientific, being contradicted by all true facts of science, but is merely a revival of ancient Greek (and ultimately Babylonian) evolutionary pantheism.” Henry Morris

Revelation 17:6 I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of those who testified to Jesus. I was greatly astounded when I saw her.

The blood of the saints here could refer either to martyrs throughout the Church Age, or just to those who have been killed for their faith during the Tribulation.

Revelation 17:7-8 But the angel said to me, "Why are you astounded? I will interpret for you the mystery of the woman and of the beast with the seven heads and ten horns that carries her. (8) The beast you saw was, and is not, but is about to come up from the abyss and then go to destruction. The inhabitants of the earth — all those whose names have not been written in the book of life since the foundation of the world — will be astounded when they see that the beast was, and is not, but is to come.

This last verse gives us the four phases of the life of the beast:

1. **Was** - his original political appearance and rise (Daniel 9:26-27).
2. **Is not** - his death by a mortal wound (Zechariah 11:17?; Revelation 13:3).
3. **About to come up** - his miraculous recovery (Revelation 13:3).
4. **Go to destruction** - his destruction at the hands of Christ at the Second Coming (Daniel 7:11; 11:45; Revelation 19:19).

Why does the angel say the beast is about to come up from the abyss even though John has already seen that in his visions? Because the event itself is still in the future to John. The earth-dwellers will be amazed when they see that the beast has recovered from his deadly wound (Revelation 13:3,14; 17:11). The beast’s miraculous recovery is what causes the people to worship him. These earth-dwellers have never had their name written in the book of life, because God in His foreknowledge and election knew they would

reject Him.

This phrase at the end of verse 8 reminds us of what Jesus said about Himself in chapter 1 verse 18:

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God — the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come — the All-Powerful! In his return from the dead, the Beast, as Antichrist, mimics the true Christ who forever achieved victory over death.

Revelation 17:9-10 (This requires a mind that has wisdom.) The seven heads are seven mountains the woman sits on. They are also seven kings: (10) five have fallen; one is, and the other has not yet come, but whenever he does come, he must remain for only a brief time.

I'll tell you right up front, this passage is very tough to figure out. People who are living in the Tribulation will read this and it will make sense to them, but all we can do is try.

The relationship between kings and mountains is well-established in Scripture—mountains represent the power of kingdoms and their individual kings (Jeremiah 51:25; Daniel 2:35; Zechariah 4:7). These seven mountains, together with the eighth, will eventually be destroyed by the stone which is Christ, the Messianic King (Revelation 20:4). His kingdom is destined to become "a great mountain" and fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:35).

Some say that these are the Seven Hills of Rome, which is a proof that she is the Catholic Church. But the text tells us that they represent seven kings, and the fact that she is sitting on them seems to be speaking of control rather than location:

"The reference to the seven mountains (Rev. 17:9) which are seven heads (Rev. 17:8) actually belong to the beast (Rev. 17:3, 7; 13:1) and not the woman named Babylon. Thus, these seven heads or mountains really have nothing to do with the entity Babylon at all. It is possible to argue that the woman is still associated with the seven hills because she is sitting on them. However, it is better to see this as referring to the woman's control rather than her location. The other references to the woman sitting also refer to her control. Revelation 17:1 portrays the woman sitting on many waters. Revelation 17:15 explains that the waters represent peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. Thus, Revelation 17:1, 15 show the harlot's control over the entire world. Furthermore, Revelation 17:3 depicts the woman as sitting on the beast, which again indicates control rather than location. Thus, if the harlot's sitting indicates control rather than location twice in Revelation 17, then consistency would seem to dictate that the harlot sitting on the seven hills in Revelation 17:9 would also indicate control rather than location." Andy Woods

Of the seven kings, it says five have fallen. Most would say that these are kingdoms that had fallen before John's day that would be of the greatest significance to Israel in the plan of God. So, they could be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. Remember, we have identified Daniel's four beasts that were present and future in his day as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire. Egypt and Assyria had already been supplanted as world empires by the time of Daniel. By John's time all five had come and gone as world empires. The "one that is" must be Rome, as it was the dominant world empire in John's day.

Which kingdom is the "other has not yet come"? If you remember our study in Daniel, we saw that not all the prophecies about the 4th kingdom (the Roman Empire) had been fulfilled (Daniel 7). The little horn has not yet made his appearance among the ten horns (kings) and Daniel's 5th kingdom (Christ's) has not yet come and destroyed all the others, so we were forced to conclude that there is a second phase to the

Roman Empire that had not yet happened. That could be the kingdom that had not yet come in John's day. That is the empire that is still future to us in our day that is represented by the ten horns of Daniel's vision (Daniel 7:7,20) and the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:42).

"He must remain for only a brief time" – grammatically, "he" represents the 7th head-mountain-king which represents the 7th kingdom. And the reign of this kingdom is said to be short. Verse 12 tells us that the ten horns, all on this 7th head, receive authority for one hour with the beast. So this reference must be to the duration of the last kingdom prior to the rise of the beast, who then eclipses the 7th kingdom.

Revelation 17:11 The beast that was, and is not, is himself an eighth king and yet is one of the seven, and is going to destruction.

This refers to the reign of the beast after his recovery from his deadly wound. If his revival happens at about the midpoint of the 70th week of Daniel, then his reign will last for the 2nd half of the week, for 42 months (Revelation 13:5). In his mortal stage he is the 7th king, but in his superhuman stage (indwelt by Satan) he is the 8th king. He is an eighth kingdom in the sense that he will subdue all the other kingdoms; the ten kings of the 7th kingdom will give him their authority, as it says in the next verse:

Revelation 17:12-13 The ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but will receive ruling authority as kings with the beast for one hour. (13) These kings have a single intent, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

As it says in Daniel 7, an 11th "little" horn, the beast, will come up among the ten horns, and they will give their authority to him. For some reason, the beast eventually destroys three of the ten horns (Daniel 7:20). "One hour" is a biblical term that just means a short time.

Revelation 17:14 They will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those accompanying the Lamb are the called, chosen, and faithful."

The Lamb is given a title that belonged to the Father in the O.T. (Deuteronomy 10:17). This is a huge verse, do not miss it! Jesus is God! Paul says something similar in 1 Timothy 6:15-16.

This verse is not speaking of the ages-long war between the spiritual forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of the Lamb (although that ongoing conflict is a fact of Scripture), but speaks of the final physical conflict of the armies of the world as they attempt to stop the Messiah from coming to sit upon the throne of David in His Millennial Reign. The Beast, his kings, and kings from all around the world (Revelation 16:14) will eventually gather to war against God at the Campaign of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21). This is a doomed attempt to keep the Lamb from taking back what is rightfully His, and is the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 2:

Psalms 2:2-3 The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, (3) "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"

At that time, the long wait of the Son at the right hand of the Father will come to an end:

Psalms 110:1-6 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." (2) The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter

from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." (3) Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew. (4) The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." (5) The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. (6) He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.

"Those accompanying the Lamb" – this is speaking of those who come with Jesus at His 2nd Coming, and makes it pretty clear that those of us who have trusted in Christ and made Him our Lord will be returning with Him from heaven to the earth (Revelation 19:14,19). Also read Jude 1:14-15, Joel 3:9-14, and Zechariah 14:4-5. We also know that the holy angels will come with Him (Matthew 16:27, 25:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

"called, chosen, and faithful" – this has to be the saints. Angels can also be "chosen", but were never called. The saints are called, chosen, and faithful (1 Peter 2:9). They did not choose Him, but He chose them (John 15:16). At the time of the 2nd coming, there will be three categories of believers in heaven:

1. **Pre-Church Saints** - Believers who died prior to the formation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Since the Spirit did not begin baptizing believers into the body of Christ until then (John 7:38-39; Acts 2; 1Corinthians 12:13), they were never part of the body of Christ. At death, their souls and spirits entered paradise in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22) until they ascended when paradise relocated to heaven following the crucifixion (Luke 23:43).
2. **Church Saints** - Believers who lived after the giving of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (John 7:38-39; Acts 2) and were baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The spirit and soul of those who died prior to the *Rapture* ascended to heaven at death (2 Corinthians 5:6; Philippians 1:23) Being *in Christ*, they were physically resurrected (or translated if alive) at the *Rapture* of the Church prior to the Tribulation (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
3. **Post-Church Saints** - Believers who come to faith after the *Rapture* of the Church—the removal of the body of Christ. They died a natural death or were martyred (Revelation 2:10, 13; 12:11; 15:2) and their spirit and soul ascended to heaven at death (2 Corinthians 5:6; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 7:14).

The Church saints are the only ones who have been resurrected prior to the 2nd coming. When Christ returns, He will be bringing His spiritual body and the holy angels with Him. It seems doubtful that saints who have not yet been resurrected will return with Christ. They will receive their resurrected bodies after the Second Coming, prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:4).

Revelation 17:15-16 Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw (where the prostitute is seated) are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. (16) The ten horns that you saw, and the beast — these will hate the prostitute and make her desolate and naked. They will consume her flesh and burn her up with fire.

Verse 15 describes the prostitute's influence over the whole world. So, the Beast, who was supporting her, will eventually come to hate her and will destroy her. The manuscript that the King James version is based on leaves out the beast in this verse, which leads proponents of the KJV to believe it is only the ten kings who hate the prostitute, that there may be some kind of rebellion that occurs here against the beast. Most manuscripts include the beast, though. There are many speculations about why this happens, but scripture does not specifically say why. And it could be of a religious, commercial, or political nature. It could be that the beast is envious of the control Babylon has on the nations. In any case, this fulfills what Jeremiah said:

Jeremiah 4:30 *And you, O desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, although you decorate yourself with ornaments of gold, although you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you make yourself beautiful. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life.*

We'll read more about the destruction of Babylon in the next chapter. She will be stripped of her fine clothing, her wealth, and will be burned with fire.

Revelation 17:17 *For God has put into their minds to carry out his purpose by making a decision to give their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.*

Here again we see that God is in sovereign control over all these events in Revelation. The tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is impossible to escape – you cannot emphasize one without the other (Luke 22:21-22).

Revelation 17:18 *As for the woman you saw, she is the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth."*

The angel tells us clearly here that the woman is a CITY. And she rides the Beast and is in control over the nations. Jerusalem is also called the great city in Revelation 11:8, which leads some to believe that Babylon is Jerusalem, but Jerusalem in past history could never be said to have had sovereignty over the kings of the earth. That will not occur until the Millennial Kingdom. Some believe it is Rome, some believe it is New York City, etc.

I cannot be dogmatic, but I have to believe that the city is the rebuilt city of Babylon in what is now Iraq. There are too many specific prophecies in the OT about the destruction of Babylon that have never happened yet, and fit well with the prophecies of Babylon's destruction by fire in Revelation. I just cannot get around that. The view that Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church is compelling in some ways, but there are too many things that just don't fit. The only thing that doesn't fit about the literal rebuilt Babylon theory is that we have trouble believing, from this perspective of history, that it could actually be rebuilt and become an influential city again. So it seems to be a faith issue, not a textual issue.

All the other cities John speaks of in Revelation are literal cities, so why not Babylon? Could the specific prophecies of Babylon's demise in Isaiah and Jeremiah be talking about any other place? I don't think so. Some predict that Babylon will be rebuilt and the United Nations will move there. Some believe that America's presence in Iraq could be laying the groundwork for some of these things. This is an area of prophetic scripture that I think we will learn more about as time goes by. But for now, it's still a mystery. As we always keep an eye on what's happening with Israel, since she is God's timepiece, we should perhaps also watch what's happening in Iraq!

"The ecumenical movements under the pope's leadership are leading to religious Babylon (Rev. 17); the world trade movement to commercial Babylon (Rev. 13:11-18; 18), and the New World Order to political Babylon (Rev. 13:1-10). After the Rapture, the whore of religious Babylon will rule the revived empire for three and one half years, be overthrown, and the Beast of political Babylon will become ruler on planet earth." Stanley E. Price

Chapter 18 – Babylon is Destroyed

In the last chapter John describes a city named Babylon as a great prostitute and goes on to tell of her relationship with the beast. In this chapter John tells us about her overthrow and complete destruction.

Some interpreters try to make the prostitute in chapter 17 a separate entity than Babylon, but there is really no compelling reason to do so. Both of these chapters are describing Babylon. Here are some verses in the Old Testament that describe her destruction: Isaiah 13:19-20, 21:9-10, 47:11, Jeremiah 50:13, 26, 39-40, 51:26, 29, 43, 58, 61-62.

“Not only are the OT prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah unfulfilled in the history of Babylon, but John’s vision recorded in approximately 95 A.D. reiterates and even extends these predictions. Either God is a God of wholesale and extensive exaggeration or a literal destruction remains pending. It is impossible, unscriptural, and irreverent to believe that such an extensive portion of God’s word is to be spiritualized or taken as hyperbole.” Tony Garland

Revelation 18:1 After these things I saw another angel, who possessed great authority, coming down out of heaven, and the earth was lit up by his radiance.

This is a different angel than the one in chapter 17 who showed John the great prostitute who is about to be judged. And he is evidently a very high ranking angel. It may be the same one who flew out earlier in 14:8 to declare Babylon’s destruction.

Revelation 18:2 He shouted with a powerful voice: "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great! She has become a lair for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detested beast.

The destruction of Babylon was part of the 7th bowl judgment in chapter 16. It is so certain and so imminent, that it is spoken of here as if it has already happened. She is called “the great” not just because of her power and commercial strength, but because she thought she was great. She was built on pride (Isaiah 13:19, Jeremiah 50:29, Daniel 4:30).

And then the angel announces what the condition of Babylon will be like after her fall. Apparently it will be some kind of holding place or prison for demons, unclean spirits, and unclean beasts. It’s the same term used for the prison Satan will be held in during the Millennial Kingdom. So this is a place of involuntary confinement so that these spirits and beasts cannot interfere with the Millennial Kingdom. Jeremiah 50:39-40 and Isaiah 13:19-22 speak more about this.

I would say from the description in this verse there will be supernatural creatures confined there that we currently have no knowledge of. Why these things are not immediately thrown into the Lake of Fire when Christ returns, I don’t know.

Revelation 18:3 For all the nations have fallen from the wine of her immoral passion, and the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have gotten rich from the power of her sensual behavior."

This tells us the reason she has been destroyed. She has polluted all the nations of the world, and that pollution involves all aspects of culture – political, commercial, and religious. The original Babylon was Babel under Nimrod, where everyone spoke one language. As the people were scattered from Babel, they took the evil practices of Babel with them. Since that time, all the nations have drunk this wine.

The merchants are the “great men of the earth”, as verse 23 says, powerful men who use their wealth to influence world affairs to further their own interests. Today, heads of large multinational corporations have more power and influence in the world than political leaders.

“Such international magnates and financiers constitute, more often than not, the power behind the throne. Kings and presidents often attain and keep their authority by sufferance of those who finance their undertakings. In turn, these great men of the earth receive land grants and trade monopolies and tax loopholes and innumerable other favors from those whom they establish in political power, all to enrich themselves still further.” Henry Morris

“It has become an axiom that “corporations have no souls,” and upon this all great moneyed corporations act, though the men who constitute them will find out a different doctrine when they come to the day of judgment. And when it comes to these great and ever magnifying commercial compacts and interests, there is not a law of God or man which is not compelled to yield if found in the way. . . . If the question were ever pressed in these circles, What is truth? it would be hooted and laughed to scorn. The cry would be, “What have we to do with that? Let every one quietly enjoy his own opinions.” . . . Church is nothing, State is nothing, creed is nothing, Bible is nothing, Sunday is nothing, religious scruples are nothing, conscience is nothing, everything is practically nothing, except as it can be turned or used to the one great end of accumulation and wealth.” J. A. Seiss

Revelation 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, so you will not take part in her sins and so you will not receive her plagues,

Like He did in the desert with Moses before the earth opened up to swallow the families of Korah and Dathan (Numbers 16:26-34), and like He did with Lot and his family before He destroyed Sodom (Genesis 19:12-15), God warns the saints in the Tribulation to leave Babylon before God judges it. This warning is repeated in O.T. verses as well (Isaiah 48:20, Jeremiah 50:8, 51:6, 9, 45, 50, Zechariah 2:6-7).

If this warning takes place just before the destruction of Babylon, then that means it happens after the mark of the beast. That would logically mean that there are saints living in Babylon that would have to somehow be hiding underground, under the radar of the antichrist who is seeking to kill them.

This verse is not meant to be a general command for believers to separate from sinners (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). It is sometimes used by legalistic church leaders to control and manipulate their people. It concerns the Tribulation period, it has nothing to do with a separation from all types of commercial involvement.

Revelation 18:5-6 because her sins have piled up all the way to heaven and God has remembered her crimes. (6) Repay her the same way she repaid others; pay her back double corresponding to her deeds. In the cup she mixed, mix double the amount for her.

Under the Law of Moses, restitution of thievery involved interest of 100%—the thief was required to pay double what was stolen (Exodus 22:4). Even Jerusalem received double for all her sins (Isaiah 61:7; Jeremiah 16:18). When Jeremiah prayed for judgment of his enemies, he asked God to “bring on them the day of doom, and destroy them with double destruction!” (Jeremiah 17:18).

Revelation 18:7 As much as she exalted herself and lived in sensual luxury, to this extent give her torment and grief because she said to herself, 'I rule as queen and am no widow; I will never experience grief!'

She thinks she's queen because she reigns over the kings of the earth (Isaiah 47:1-5). She's so proud she even thinks she is immune to God's judgment (Isaiah 47:8-9)! It's interesting that Catholicism exalts Mary, and calls her the “Queen of Heaven”.

Revelation 18:8 For this reason, she will experience her plagues in a single day: disease, mourning, and famine, and she will be burned down with fire, because the Lord God who judges her is powerful!"

This has never before happened in history, it is still future. When judgment finally comes, it will be quick and I believe this is one literal day here, her destruction will happen in one single day. Also Isaiah 47:9, 11; Revelation 18:9, 10, 17, 19. Her destruction will be by fire, like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13:19-20; 47:14; Jeremiah 50:40; 51:58; Revelation 18:9). Her burning is complete and final: "Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" (Revelation 19:3). The Beast and the ten kings of the end will also be involved in her destruction (Revelation 17:16).

Revelation 18:9-10 Then the kings of the earth who committed immoral acts with her and lived in sensual luxury with her will weep and wail for her when they see the smoke from the fire that burns her up. (10) They will stand a long way off because they are afraid of her torment, and will say, "Woe, woe, O great city, Babylon the powerful city! For in a single hour your doom has come!"

They will weep and wail because they will no longer benefit from her prostitution. And they are amazed that the seemingly impregnable city is suddenly devastated and brought down to nothing.

Revelation 18:11-14 Then the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn for her because no one buys their cargo any longer — (12) cargo such as gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all sorts of things made of citron wood, all sorts of objects made of ivory, all sorts of things made of expensive wood, bronze, iron and marble, (13) cinnamon, spice, incense, perfumed ointment, frankincense, wine, olive oil and costly flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and four-wheeled carriages, slaves and human lives. (14) (The ripe fruit you greatly desired has gone from you, and all your luxury and splendor have gone from you — they will never ever be found again!)

So Babylon will be a center of trade, also. Commercialism contributes to materialism and godlessness. Although material things are not evil, an overabundance of things can cause covetousness and idolatry. The more time you spend trying to make money and getting more things, the more you neglect the things of God. In the destruction of Babylon we see God judging commercialism and materialism.

These merchants of the earth are not mourning over the loss of life, or their own sins, but over their loss of profit. You might wonder how there would still be wealthy merchants even with all the disasters that have come upon the earth by this point at the end of the Tribulation. But if you look at history, there have always been companies and individuals who take advantage of circumstances and make huge profits during the worst disasters. This city may be one of the last places on earth that has amassed enough wealth to be able to afford these things at this time, and then all of a sudden it's all gone – the people and the material wealth that is stored there.

These things mentioned in these verses would have been material things known in John's day, but are goods of an affluent society. Notice slavery is mentioned, which could also include prostitution. Both are still a problem in the world today. Women and children are being sold in open slave markets in the Sudan today. Christians are sold as slaves in some Islamic countries. Women are sold into slavery as prostitutes in some Asian countries; there are even reports of this happening in the Caribbean and some South American countries.

"The international traffic in forced prostitution, both of men and women, is a tragic but financially lucrative business of modern times and will undoubtedly become even bigger in the evil days ahead. These vice barons are particularly venomous "great men" of the earth, not only amassing great wealth for themselves, but destroying both the "bodies and souls" of the hapless girls and boys who come under their control." Morris

Revelation 18:15-19 The merchants who sold these things, who got rich from her, will stand a long way off because they are afraid of her torment. They will weep and mourn, (16) saying, "Woe, woe, O great city — dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet clothing, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls — (17) because in a single hour such great wealth has been destroyed!" And every ship's captain, and all who sail along the coast — seamen, and all who make their living from the sea, stood a long way off (18) and began to shout when they saw the smoke from the fire that burned her up, "Who is like the great city?" (19) And they threw dust on their heads and were shouting with weeping and mourning, "Woe, Woe, O great city — in which all those who had ships on the sea got rich from her wealth — because in a single hour she has been destroyed!"

Verse 17-18 is used by some to discourage the view that this is the literal city of Babylon. Babylon is too far from a sea for the smoke from her burning to be seen by ships. Those who hold to the literal Babylon view respond by saying this could be speaking of ships on the Euphrates River, which is deep enough to be made navigable by large ships.

This is also a problem for those who hold to the Babylon as Rome theory, because Rome has never been a great city of commerce or a major seaport. In some ways it's just as difficult to believe in the revival of Rome to fit these descriptions as it is to believe in a revival of Babylon.

Revelation 18:20 (Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has pronounced judgment against her on your behalf!)

There's weeping and mourning over Babylon on earth, except for the saints, but in heaven everyone is rejoicing that this great evil has been brought down. This is answered prayer for the living saints and the martyrs in heaven (Revelation 6:10, 8:3-4).

Revelation 18:21 Then one powerful angel picked up a stone like a huge millstone, threw it into the sea, and said, "With this kind of sudden violent force Babylon the great city will be thrown down and it will never be found again!"

The angel now reenacts the declaration which Jeremiah told Seraiah to speak over the city thousands of years before:

Jeremiah 51:60-64 So Jeremiah wrote in a single scroll all the calamity which would come upon Babylon, that is, all these words which have been written concerning Babylon. (61) Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "As soon as you come to Babylon, then see that you read all these words aloud, (62) and say, 'You, O LORD, have promised concerning this place to cut it off, so that there will be nothing dwelling in it, whether man or beast, but it will be a perpetual desolation.' (63) "And as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you will tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, (64) and say, 'Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her; and they will become exhausted.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

This is pretty good evidence that future Babylon in Revelation is the literal city of Babylon. This judgment has never before happened in history, and Jeremiah sends Seraiah to the literal city to declare this judgment.

“Every word is employed to impress us with its suddenness and completeness. And inasmuch as all other fulfilled prophecies have been fulfilled to the very letter; and Babylon, though fallen gradually, and very low, has never suffered such a destruction. There is only one conclusion . . . it will be revived, and exceed all its former magnificence.” Bullinger

Revelation 18:22-24 **And the sound of the harpists, musicians, flute players, and trumpeters will never be heard in you again. No craftsman who practices any trade will ever be found in you again; the noise of a mill will never be heard in you again. (23) Even the light from a lamp will never shine in you again! The voices of the bridegroom and his bride will never be heard in you again. For your merchants were the tycoons of the world, because all the nations were deceived by your magic spells! (24) The blood of the saints and prophets was found in her, along with the blood of all those who had been killed on the earth.”**

Isaiah lists some of her sorceries: enchantments, astrology, star-gazing, and monthly predictions (Isaiah 47:12-13).

In some way Babylon will be responsible for the deaths of all the Tribulation martyrs, which tells us Babylon may already be on the scene at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Next lesson: Chapter 19 – Armageddon and the Glorious Appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ!