

REVELATION CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

People Will Choose Hell Over Heaven

Revelation 18:1-3

Revelation 18:1-3 NLT:

¹ *After all this I saw another angel come down from heaven with great authority, and the earth grew bright with his splendor.*

² *He gave a mighty shout: “**Babylon is fallen**—that **great city** is fallen! She has become a home for demons. She is a hideout for every foul spirit, a hideout for every foul vulture and every foul and dreadful animal.*

³ *For **all the nations have fallen** because of the wine of her passionate immorality. The kings of the world have committed adultery with her. **Because of her desires for extravagant luxury**, the merchants of the world have grown rich.”*

Now the good news begins—good news, that is, from the perspective of Christians. An angel appears in bright light and splendor, and with great authority he announces that Babylon is done for. He outlines her crimes, which symbolically boil down to her rejection of Jehovah God and her idolatry. All the rulers have “*committed adultery*,” that is, they have gotten in bed with the false gods of greed, money, and materialism. The big business people have become rich with obscene salaries. As we look around today, we can see that greed and worship of luxury has gone beyond the business world and ensnared athletes, movie and music stars. Verse three includes the “*kings*” or “*nations*” of the world, indicating that the leaders of nations have also participated in this love affair with money and greed.

Indeed, if we just look at our own country we see that the politicians who hold political office in the United States provide a life-style of luxury for themselves and their cronies which would infuriate the average American on the street if they were aware of it. They are not aware of it because the news media in this country does not report it. The media is just one group of government cronies that the politicians include in the bribery business. As long as the media cooperates with the government, they are given special privileges and are included in a very lucrative payback system from the government. It goes something like this: the government tells the news media what they want them to report. If the media does what the government wants, the media executives are granted ways of making far more money and enjoying far more special privileges than they would if they challenged the government’s activities.

Perhaps you would find it interesting to know that at the time of this writing (2010) when the President of the United States, Barack Obama, takes a trip on Air Force One, he almost always takes members of the press that write about him favorably as well as perhaps a hundred or so of his White House staff including his personal chef. The jumbo jet is equipped to carry Obama's personal limousine, his helicopter, and about half-a-dozen other vehicles for his private motorcade. Whenever the president takes a trip in Air Force One, it costs the American taxpayers at least \$500,000 and possibly upwards of \$1,000,000, and he does this all too frequently. A couple of weeks ago he went to Ohio to promote one of his programs to a hand-picked, supportive crowd of people, and he spoke for only ten or fifteen minutes and returned to Washington. If you are dependent on government welfare checks or social security checks, or any other form of government assistance and those services ever need to be cut back, you might want to recognize that you may soon be starving because the President and most other politicians choose personal luxury over the welfare of the people.

The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, has a private jet at her disposal to go back and forth to San Francisco each week. The majority leader of the Senate, Harry Reid, has the same gift of a private jet. When congressmen travel to other countries for no worthwhile purpose than having a luxurious vacation, they are provided a private jet as well. Then of course they must stay at the most expensive hotels, eat the most expensive food, drink the most expensive alcohol, and enjoy sundry other pleasures that you can use your own imagination to uncover. And do not forget, it all comes out of your tax dollars. That type of behavior in one way or another is enjoyed by most members of Congress and every government agency from the President of the United States to the members of your local city council, and **we are the ones that pay for it all**. Think of all the benefits that could be provided to the people of the United States if all this corruption were eliminated. And do you know what? It will be at the second coming of Jesus because God promises that, and we see it happening here in Babylon as she is punished by total destruction. And **those who took advantage of the people in their roles as public servants will pay dearly for rejecting the needs of the poor and more so for rejecting God**. God will give them the same punishment for the suffering they caused others, and then they will cry and whine and beg for mercy, but to no avail; it will be too late.

Continuing in Revelation 18:4 NLT:

⁴ *Then I heard another voice calling from heaven, “**Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her.***

⁵ *For her sins are piled as high as heaven, and God remembers her evil deeds.*

⁶ *Do to her as she has done to others. Double her penalty for all her evil deeds. She brewed a cup of terror for others, so **brew twice as much for her.***

⁷ *She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so match it now with torment and sorrow. She boasted in her heart, ‘I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow, and I have no reason to mourn.’*

⁸ *Therefore, these plagues will overtake her **in a single day**— death and mourning and famine. **She will be completely consumed by fire**, for the Lord God who judges her is mighty.”*

⁹ *And **the kings of the world** who committed adultery with her and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains.*

¹⁰ *They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, “How terrible, how terrible for you, **O Babylon, you great city! In a single moment God’s judgment came on you.**”*

¹¹ *The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods.*

¹² *She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth; things made of fragrant thyine wood, ivory goods, and objects made of expensive wood; and bronze, iron, and marble.*

¹³ *She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, and bodies— that is, human slaves.*

¹⁴ *“**The fancy things you loved so much are gone,**” they cry. “**All your luxuries and splendor are gone forever, never to be yours again.**”*

¹⁵ *The merchants who became wealthy by selling her these things will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and cry out,*

¹⁶ *“How terrible, how terrible for that great city! She was clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls!*

¹⁷ ***In a single moment all the wealth of the city is gone!**” And all the captains of the merchant ships and their passengers and sailors and crews will stand at a distance.*

¹⁸ *They will cry out as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, “Where is there another city as great as this?”*

¹⁹ *And they will weep and throw dust on their heads to show their grief. And they will cry out, “How terrible, how terrible for that great city! The shipowners became wealthy by transporting her great wealth on the seas. In a single moment it is all gone.”*

²⁰ *Rejoice over her fate, O heaven and people of God and apostles and prophets! For at last God has judged her for your sakes.*

²¹ *Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a huge millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted, “Just like this, the great city Babylon will be thrown down with violence and will never be found again.*

²² *The sound of harps, singers, flutes, and trumpets will never be heard in you again. No craftsmen and no trades will ever be found in you again. The sound of the mill will never be heard in you again.*

²³ *The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The happy voices of brides and grooms will never be heard in you again. For your merchants*

were the greatest in the world, and you deceived the nations with your sorceries.

²⁴ *In your streets flowed the blood of the prophets and of God's holy people and the blood of people slaughtered all over the world."*

While Revelation chapter seventeen described Babylon as the great **prostitute** in terms of religion, chapter eighteen describes her downfall in terms of an economic and political collapse. Babylon is not restricted to a city itself. It could possibly even refer to the political and economic system prevailing in the world. Babylon is the capital of the entire world and rules over it during the Tribulation period. **It will be a world that mocks and defies God and His Christ** and chases after every possible fleshly desire imaginable, which everyone who follows this path will live to regret (or perhaps I should say die to regret).

If there is anyone hearing or reading these words right now and you do not have Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and you die, whether on the final day or tomorrow, you will go to Hell and eventually to the Lake of Fire, and there will be no second chances once you die.

So if you hear or read these words and you do not ask Jesus to reveal the truth to you and invite Him to be your Savior, you will only have yourself to blame for your forever. In fact it will be so bad in Hell that you will probably want to kill yourself. But that will not be possible because you are already dead, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say you are among the living dead who reside among whatever misery Hell will provide you. Do not let pride rule over reason. **Make that decision right now so you will not be among the living dead forever.**

We were also told about the collapse of Babylon back in Revelation 14:8:

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."

Now let us take a closer look at this chapter, verse by verse.

Revelation 18:1 NAS:

*After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and **the earth was illumined** with his glory.*

The phrase "*after these things*" occurs at least nine times in Revelation. These references do not refer to chronological time but rather to a change from one vision to another. John first looks at Babylon as the great prostitute in chapter 17 and then here in chapter eighteen at the fall of Babylon.

John reports something in his vision that was prophesied in Ezekiel.¹ Ezekiel, however, was speaking of the glory of Israel's God. But here the angel comes from the presence of God to brightly light the earth so that everyone can see this glorious appearance.

Revelation 18:2 NAS:

And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

We see in verse two that Babylon has become the dwelling place of demons. If we look in the book of Isaiah we see that he spoke of a similar situation. According to Isaiah goats demons dance and call to each other in the desert.² Evil spirits live in deserted places (Luke 8:29) and in a ruined city like Babylon. It will become a place without any living humans.³ What was once a beautiful, bustling place, the hub of power and luxury, has become desolate, populated with vultures, buzzards, and demons.

This is a picture of a world without God that is now in the power of evil spirits who can make life miserable for its people.

Babylon is the prison of every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every unclean and hated beast. *Prison* here suggests a place where all these creatures have been sent to live, perhaps for a short time, or maybe this could remain on into the Millennium as kind of a hellish zoo to remind people what sin can breed. **It is a picture of a world completely devoid of God and his Word.** What a difference between this place and the **city of God**, where the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts and lives of the saints. **There the light of the Gospel shines brightly and the people live in joy and happiness.**

Revelation 18:3 NAS:

"For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

We have three classes of people described in verse three: the “*masses*” or ordinary people, the **government leaders**, and the **businessmen**. If we go back to Revelation 14:8, we see an almost identical description.

Revelation 14:8 NAS:

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of

¹ Ezekiel 43:2 (Whole Chapter); “and behold, the [Is 6:3; Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 10:18, 19] glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the [Ezek 11:23] east And His [Ezek 1:24; Rev 1:15; 14:2] voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth [Ezek 1:28; 10:4; Rev 18:1] **shone with His glory.**”

² Isaiah 13:21; 34:14 NRSV

³ Jer. 50:39; 51:37.

the passion of her immorality."

Babylon will be successful in leading astray **the masses of people**. These masses will follow her in symbolically drinking the wine of her immorality that has provoked God to wrath (14:10; 16:19). The wine they drink, spiritually speaking, is to deliberately sin against God and acting as if He did not exist.

The second category of people John mentions is **the kings of the earth, or the governing leaders**. They commit spiritual adultery with Babylon (Revelation 7:2), that is, they give leadership by pursuing religious, political, and economic goals. They worship idols, rule harshly, and enrich themselves at the expense of others who are less fortunate than they. Since **money is their idol**, they force all their subordinates to worship this god as well. It is no wonder that the Christians in the province⁴ of Asia lived in abject poverty: they refused to submit to the dictates of local gods and guilds (see Revelation chapters 2 and 3).⁵

The third group are the **merchants of the world, the business people**. As far back as Old Testament times, the merchants of Tyre were considered to be the center of world commerce. Isaiah writes:

Isaiah 23:8 NAS:

*Who has planned this against **Tyre**, the bestower of crowns, Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?*

“Similarly, traders from numerous places sailed along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to do business in the ports of Spain, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Israel, and Arabia (Ezekiel 27:12-23). In its heyday, Rome was the storehouse of all the products and produce in the ancient world.”⁶ Today multinational corporations dominate world trade and often fail to protect the environment or their own workers. As a consequence, the rich increase their assets and display their wealth while those who are extremely poor face starvation, sickness, and death.⁷

Conducting business is certainly a worthwhile endeavor to create jobs, maintain sound economic conditions, and improve the quality of life. However, when greed (which is idolatry, the worship of wealth) raises its ugly head, those idolaters are in effect calling down the wrath of God on their own heads.⁸

Colossians 3:5-6 NAS:

⁵ *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, **which amounts to***

⁴ Administrative areas set up within the Roman Empire.

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idolatry.

⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

God has little patience with those who are rich and allow the poor to suffer. There is nothing wrong with being rich, but when you are rich and have no compassion on the poor you are angering God.

Isaiah 3:14-15 NLT:

¹⁴ *The LORD comes forward to pronounce judgment on the elders and rulers of his people: “You have ruined Israel, my vineyard. Your houses are filled with things stolen from the poor.*

¹⁵ *How dare you crush my people, grinding the faces of the poor into the dust?” demands the Lord, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.⁹*

To bring this home and right down to today’s news, think about how God must feel about what our government is allowing to happen to the people of the Gulf Coast region, and what His response might be toward those who are allowing it to happen.

⁹ Also see Amos 2:7.