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**A0620 – May 14, 2006 – Rev 18:1-19 – The Judgment Of The Babylonian
System Of Commerce**

The last two Sundays we worked through Rev 17 where we got some detail concerning the Babylonian system of religion which took its first visible form in the city of Babel in Gen 10-11. This system rejects God's method which is by grace through faith in God's chosen sacrifice and replaces it with human works. Grace is the opposite of works and the Bible defines faith as non-meritorious so that only faith is consistent with grace. But, of course, Satan wants to deceive men into false religious systems that violate God's by grace through faith mechanism. Now, I take it that Satan was behind the development of this false religious system at Babel and that the system had developed to the point that it became visible in the form of a city. And so, the city of Babel was the first visible form of the Kingdom of Satan. And it's quite clear that God hated this false religion system and judged it by confusing the languages. And I always ask people, what's the next event in the Bible after God judged Babel? It's the call of Abraham and here we have God beginning to build His kingdom on earth with this one many Abraham. So, we have these two lines that run through Scripture in the conflict between God and Satan. Satan is trying to re-establish his kingdom on earth and God is trying to establish His kingdom on earth. The development of the kingdom of Satan is always by human works and the development of the kingdom of God is always by grace through faith. So, these two kingdom programs are going to converge in the future Tribulation when Satan is about to establish His kingdom on earth with Antichrist as his king and Jerusalem as His throne. But God is not going to let this happen. God is like a master chess player and just when it seems that Satan has the advantage the nation of Israel follows the by grace through faith mechanism, believing that Jesus is the Messiah and this stimulates Christ's return and the destruction of His enemies. We'll see in chapter 19 that this is a brilliant military maneuver by a superior being from a far superior military position. And so, the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God are on a collision course that will ultimately meet in chapter 19 when the two face off for the finale of the Campaign of Armageddon.

Now, before we reach this point, maybe just weeks or months ahead of this final collision we have chapters 17 and 18. And these chapters are really quite marvelous. They are answering the question “Why is Babylon judged?” And the answer is two-fold.

1. Because of her religious corruption (ch 17)
2. Because of her commercial/material corruption (ch 18)

What’s so marvelous about these chapters is that they describe Satan’s kingdom beginning to self-destruct. Remember, even though it’s God who judges Babylon it’s the Antichrist and the ten kings who destroy her. So, what we are seeing is the fact that Satan is never able to realize his ultimate plans, he’s not able to bring his plan to pass. Just about the time he’s almost clinched his program of works God’s program of by grace through faith salvation crushes Satan’s program. So, what we are seeing in these two chapters is preparatory for the finale of the Campaign of Armageddon in chapter 19.

Revelation 18:1 After these things (*meta tauta* - new vision) I saw another (*allon*) angel coming down from heaven having great authority, and the earth was illumined from his glory.

After these things is *meta tauta*, the Greek phrase for a completely new vision, not just a new scene (cf Rev 1:19; 4:1; 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3). This separates the judgment of the Babylonian system of religion from the judgment of the Babylonian system of commerce. However, the distinction is not total because the great city in both chapters is Babylon so that there are not two Babylon’s but two aspects of future Babylon; corrupt religion and corrupt commerce.

And John saw **another angel**, this is another of the same kind (*allon*), so he is of the same class as the seven angels who had the seven bowls (cf 17:1). And he was **coming down from heaven having great authority**, authority obviously given to him by God, the source of all authority, **and the earth was illumined from his glory**. The reason he shines with glory is because he has recently been in the presence of God and thus his countenance is much like Moses countenance when he had been in God’s presence (Exod 34:29-35). In these dark days the angel’s **glory** will illumine the earth when making the announcement in verse 2.

Revelation 18:2 And he called out in a mighty voice saying, "Fallen, fallen, Babylon the great, and it has become (middle) a house of demons and a prison for every unclean spirit and prison for every unclean bird [and prison for every unclean and hated beast].

Revelation 18:3 for all the nations have drunk from the wine of the wrath of her fornication and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth grew rich from the power of her luxury.”

The angel’s announcement is one of total destruction of **Babylon**. Those who hear the announcement will be the inhabitants of the whole earth, possible because he **calls out in a mighty voice**, a voice powerful enough to be heard around the globe. His message, **“Fallen, fallen, Babylon the great** (Rev 14:8). He speaks of the fall of Babylon on the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq, which will not only be the religious headquarters of the world system in the latter days as taught in Rev 17 but also the commercial headquarters as taught in this chapter. What will one day be a great religious and commercial center will become a **house of demons and a prison house for every unclean spirit and bird and every hated beast**. This is a picture of complete desolation. Similar descriptions of Babylon are found in Isa 13 and Jer 50-51.

Isaiah 13:21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats [LXX uses *daimonia* “demons”) will frolic there. ²² Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her *fateful* time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.

Jeremiah 50:39 "Therefore the desert creatures will live *there* along with the jackals; The ostriches also will live in it, And it will never again be inhabited Or dwelt in from generation to generation.

Jeremiah 51:37 "Babylon will become a heap *of ruins*, a haunt of jackals, An object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants.

The listing of unclean birds and animals is a common symbol for desolation. Most of the species listed are scavengers. Babylon has never undergone the desolation described in these verses and so, if the word of God is true then this must be fulfilled in a future Babylon which will become a thriving metropolis but will end in utter ruin. It will also serve as the location where demons will be imprisoned during the Millennial Kingdom while Satan will be bound in the abyss (Rev 20:1-2). While I’ve been unclear about the demon’s whereabouts in the past it seems from this passage that they will be imprisoned in Babylon for the 1,000 years. The reason given for such desolation is given in verse 3. **for all the nations have drunk from the wine of the wrath of her fornication and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth grew rich from the power of her luxury.”** The reasons for Babylon’s destruction relates to Her intoxication of three groups of earthdwellers; the nations, the kings, and the

merchants with false religion and idolatrous commerce. So, Babylon corrupts both body and soul (Matt 10:28).

The central idea of the following description is the excessive luxuries that have a power grip on the world; deceiving them into thinking they have no deeper need for God. The merchants will suffer more than the kings since the kings will at least maintain their political power. But the merchants depend entirely on her for their wealth. This explains why the bulk of what follows is devoted to the merchants. The words **the merchants of the earth grew rich from the power of her sensuality** makes more sense when the final word is translated **insolent luxury**. The **merchants** have leached their wealth from Babylon and what they accumulate along with wealth is arrogance. Extreme wealth is often accompanied by arrogance. The wealth of Babylon has a **power** over the **merchants**. Extreme wealth is a very powerful influence over the lives of men and often leads to the sins of self-sufficiency and pride. The link between spiritual and material idolatry in this verse is all too true in reality. "False religion often has gone hand in hand with the accumulation and abusive use of luxury" (Thomas, 319).

Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; Therefore the nations are going mad.

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."

Revelation 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of* immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

Verse 4 is an angelic announcement **from heaven** warning God's people to get out of Babylon (18:4-8) because she is about to be judged.

The Command for God's People to Get Out of Babylon (18:4-5)

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another (*allon*) voice from heaven saying, "Get out (aorist imperative) of her My people, so that you (all) may not take part in her sins, and so that you may not be taken by her plagues,

Revelation 18:5 for her sins have been united with her (joined to/stuck to) as far as heaven and God remembers her crimes."

The command to God's **people** is to **Get out** of Babylon. The reasons are two-fold. First, **so that you may not take part in her sins**. This is a derivative of the word for

“fellowship” (*koinonia*). Remaining in Babylon is a tremendous pressure to **take part/share in her sins**. The draw of her power is difficult to resist. Better to separate completely in order to avoid being captured. This is much like Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. They practically had to drag him away and his wife looked back upon the city because of her attraction to it. It appeals to the lust of the human heart. So, the first reason to **get out** is to avoid sin. The second reason to **get out** is **so that you may not be taken by her plagues**. Since her judgment is certain and her judgment is complete desolation to avoid being **taken by her plagues** requires getting out of the city. Perfect discrimination will not be in effect because, even though it is God’s judgment the executioners of His judgment will be the beast and the ten kings. This is a stiff warning of the enticements of spiritual idolatry and material excess. It has a power over our many of our young people today and pulls on them to have more and more as they try to satisfy the desire of their heart with material things. Again, this warning is not new but rooted in the OT.

Jeremiah 51:6 Flee from the midst of Babylon, And each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, For this is the LORD'S time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.

Verse 5 gives the reason for God’s judgment. **for her sins have been united with her (joined to/stuck to) as far as heaven and God remembers her crimes.**” This interesting phrase pictures her sins as piled up to heaven like brick upon brick held together by mortar (Jer 51:9). The picture harkens back to Jer 51:9 and portrays her sins as lifting up the roof of heaven. It also harkens back to

Revelation 16:19 Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

What did God remember? He remembered **her sins that reached up to heaven**. Here it says **God remembers her unrighteousness** but a literal rendering says **God remembers her crimes**. Their lust for wealth has caused them to commit many **crimes** to reach their material goals. This is all too common even among well-known people who get caught up in the lust of wealth (e.g. Martha Stewart). God will not forget to punish her and the people of God should get out of the city to avoid sin and to avoid the punishment of sin.

Measure for Measure Judgment on Babylon (18:6-8)

Revelation 18:6 Give to her even as she gave, and double the double things (repay double) according to her works, in the cup which she mixed, mix (imperative) for her double,

Revelation 18:7 in as much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury (sensuality), give so much torment and mourning to her. For in her heart she says that I sit (middle) a queen and I am not a widow and mourning I do not experience (orao).

These verses describe a civilization so sinful that it has reached the ultimate level of evil that God will permit. This should shock us all since we look at the world around us and wonder how much worse it can get before God judges. Yet, it can get much worse and it will get much worse. When this point is reached the time for repentance is over and the time for retaliation has come. Thus, **Give to her even as she gave**. This is the principle of *lex talionis*, “the law of retaliation”, eye for eye, tooth for tooth which is a divine retaliation for those who refuse to believe in His son. Now, if men reject the punishment that Jesus Christ took for them then there is nothing left to do but return upon them the just punishment they deserve. Now, the phrase **and repay double** has caused difficulty since it seems that God is saying He will not give them the same measure that they dished out but double. Yet the Greek has a different intention. “To requite in double measure meant to requite in full (cf. Ex. 22:4, 7, 9; Isa. 40:2; 61:7; Jer. 16:18; 17:18; Zech. 9:12). It does not mean retribution double in severity to the seriousness of the sin.” Thus “repay double” means the punishment should be the exact equivalent of the offence in the same way that a person who looks exactly like someone else is called his “double” (Thomas, 324). The text goes on to say **repay her according to her works**. *kata* with the accusative means “according to the standard” so this confirms that the judgment will be ‘measure for measure’. Where will the judgment be mixed? **in the cup which she mixed**. This is interesting. She mixed a poisonous concoction in order to intoxicate the earth and when God judges them He will mix her judgment in that very same **cup**.

Verse 7 gives the measure for measure, **in as much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury (sensuality), give so much torment and mourning to her. For in her heart she says that I sit (middle) a queen and I am not a widow and mourning I do not experience (orao)**. Six sins are highlighted here. Six is the number of man. First, Babylon’s sin of “self-glorification” **she glorified herself**, the second “self-sufficiency” **she lived in luxury** claiming to need nothing besides her wealth, the third “self-centeredness” **she said in her heart**, the fourth “self-deification” **I sit as Queen**, the fifth “self-security” **I am not a widow** nor can I become a widow, the sixth “self-sustaining” **I do not experience mourning**, I am exempt from the effects of loss. Such claims will be shattered ‘measure for measure’ just as the OT predicts.

Psalm 137:8 O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

Jeremiah 50:15 "Raise your battle cry against her on every side! She has given herself up, her pillars have fallen, Her walls have been torn down. For this is the vengeance of the LORD: Take vengeance on her; As she has done *to others*, so do to her.

Revelation 18:8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned down with fire, for the Lord God who has judged her is strong.

For this reason, that is, because of her six sins of self-exaltation, **in one day her plagues will come**. That is, her plagues will come swiftly and unexpectedly. **In one day** her great wealth will be laid waste. So, the greatest and richest city the world will have ever known will be completely **burned down with fire**. This is why God's people should get out of the city. All who are in it will experience **death**, the result of **death** is **mourning** and the result of the destruction of such a center of trade will be **famine**. **famine** for those who took the mark of the beast and who were able to buy and sell. The presence of **mourning and famine** shows that this judgment does not take place at the very end of the Tribulation because **famine** takes some time to set in. But we are near the end.

The entire city will be **burned down with fire, for the Lord God who has judged her is strong**. It is God who is judging her but the executioners of His judgment are the Antichrist and the ten kings.

Revelation 17:16 "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

What will happen is God will put in the hearts of the ten kings to give their kingdom to the beast for one hour. Their purpose will be to plunder the city of Babylon of her wealth, expose her, set the city on fire and finally wage war with the Lamb. God's purpose in uniting their kingdom is to lure all His enemies into one place so that He can enter into holy war with them and annihilate every last one of them. But at this point, before all this unfolds the Antichrist and the ten kings will no longer need the city of Babylon so they dispose of her to exalt their own system. It is very interesting to see how Satan's kingdom is beginning to turn in on itself and crumble. But it demonstrates that Satan is not able to

bring his plans to pass. Only God is able to bring about His plans and purposes. The verse closes with a declaration of God's strength. No one can withstand His almighty power and purposes. So, the executioners of the judgment are God's enemies whom He uses to execute His vengeance.

The Lament of the Kings of the Earth (18:9-10)

When the city is destroyed there will be one response of lament by three groups of earthdwellers: kings, merchants, sea-faring people.

Revelation 18:9 And the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her and lived in luxury will weep (active) and lament (middle) over her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

Revelation 18:10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the mighty city, for [in] one hour your judgment has come."

The response of **the kings of the earth** to this destruction is one of intense weeping and lament **when they see the smoke of her burning**. They are so attached to her; they have laid everything on the line and sold their soul to materialism. They realize this is total economic collapse and it did not come about gradually but suddenly which intensifies the sorrow. Again the **burning** of the city is mentioned and it is the Antichrist and the ten kings who burn her (17:16).

Due to the **smoke of her burning** they **stand at a distance** for fear that if they go near they too will be judged. It's a common human response to stare in awe at raging fires. And they will say **"Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the mighty city, for in one hour your judgment has come."** The word **woe** is *ouai* and means "how horrible it is". From their materialist perspective this is horrible. The repetition reveals how intense their sorrow is over this great loss. But in reality it is nothing compared to losing one's soul forever (give the gospel). They call **Babylon, the great city** and it will be the greatest city ever in terms of material wealth and prosperity that the world has ever known. But in reality it is the **least city** with respect to the true standard of measuring value. They call it **the mighty city** but in reality she only seemed to be **mighty**. We are deceived when we think that wealth means strength (see 2 Cor 12:9 for the opposite in the Christian life). We are deceived when we think that wealth means greatness. As we see here her judgment comes in just **one hour**, the same amount of time the kings receive authority with the beast (Rev 17:12) strengthening the conclusion that they are the executioners of God's judgment.

The Lament of the Merchants of the Earth (18:11-17a)

Revelation 18:11 And the merchants of the earth weep and lament over her, for no one buys their cargo any longer,

Revelation 18:12 cargo of gold and silver and of precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of scented wood and every kind of ivory object and every kind of object from valuable wood and brass and iron and marble,

Revelation 18:13 and cinnamon (*kinnamomon*) and spice and incenses and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine wheat flour and grain and cattle and sheep and horses and carriages and slaves, even souls of mankind.

The reason **the merchants of the earth weep and lament over her** is because **no one buys their cargo any longer**. The city that made them rich is destroyed and their cargoes remain packed away in shipping containers on board ship, probably on the Euphrates River which is navigable for trade up to 500 miles (Rome has no ports for ship trading).

The **cargo** mentioned in verses 12-14 fits in seven classes:

1. precious wares (gold, silver, precious stones, pearls)
2. precious fabrics (fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet)
3. expensive materials for furniture (scented wood, ivory, valuable wood, brass, iron, marble)
4. precious spices (cinnamon, spice, incenses, perfume, frankincense)
5. precious foods (wine, olive oil, fine wheat flour, grain)
6. merchandise for agricultural and domestic use (cattle, sheep, horses, carriages)
7. human slavery (slaves, even souls of mankind)

Now, there is nothing wrong with these materials intrinsically. Nor is there anything wrong with possessing these things. What is wrong is when they take the place of God. They are a part of creation and only the Creator is to be praised (Rom 1:25). When the creator is replaced by some aspect of the creation the six sins mentioned in verse seven are the usual result.

1. “self-glorification”
2. “self-sufficiency”
3. “self-centeredness”
4. “self-deification”
5. “self-security”
6. “self-sustaining”

In reality, only God the Creator is to be glorified; only God the Creator is sufficient. He is to be our all –sufficiency. God the Creator is to be at the center of our lives, only the Creator is God, we are not gods, nor is anything that is made a god, and thus only He is to be worshipped. Only in God the Creator are we to find security, not in our friends, family or wealth, because only in Him do we find complete reliability (faithfulness), and finally only God the creator is self-sustaining, He needs nothing outside of Himself. So, it is clear that all these luxurious items have replaced God but from the burning of the city it is clear that these things do not last and cannot truly satisfy.

So, all that we have seen today is a description of judgments preparatory for the finale of the Campaign of Armageddon. Judgments on the false religion necessary to the development of Satan’s kingdom program and judgment on the commercial idolatry that keeps the earthdwellers from sensing any deeper need for God. Now, although these truths are written to the future Tribulation saints there are applications for Christians today. One is not to be a part of propagating false religion. The second is not to be a part of excessive materialism. We are to be devoted completely to Christ, separating from the world system which is anti-God (1 John 2:15-17). We are to understand material things within the proper context and never let them dominate our mentality and enslave us. False religion is an imitation of spiritual truth and seeks to satisfy the spiritual thirst of the human soul. Excessive materialism is meant to satisfy the bodies thirst for peace and tranquility. So, the devils schemes are meant to play on both body and soul so as to lure us down his deceptive path. But the word of God warns,

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

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