

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**A0621 – May 21, 2006 – Rev 18:14-24 – The Judgment Of The Babylonian
System Of Commerce – 2**

Now, we pick up chapter 18 in the midst of the future destruction of the city of Babylon—the central headquarters of false religion and corrupt commerce in the latter days. This tremendous system of filth, erected by Satan, is specifically designed to corrupt both the body and souls of men so they will not believe the gospel and be saved. So, Satan appeals to the lust of the soul through both false religion and materialism. See, the soul is born into this world without a relationship to God and so there is a void that men need to fill. And God knows that it can only be satisfied if filled by Him. Satan knows this too and therefore he seeks to fill the void with false religion. To do this he sponsors counterfeits, some of which are better than others and the one described in chapter 17 is the greatest counterfeit of the truth that the world has ever or will ever see. But it cannot restore a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So, Satan counterfeits the real in order to deceive men into thinking they have filled the void in their hearts. Now, Satan also appeals to the body through the soul. The lust of the depraved soul desires excessive luxury which has a tremendous drawing power. The soul lusts, the eye sees and the body is corrupted by this process. Now, it's very captivating and it leads to the danger of self-sufficiency, the idea that I've got it all together and have no deeper need for God. Now, the world is heading toward materialism on an unprecedented level and that's chapter 18. It says that such great wealth will be laid waste in one hour. Since it will not last forever it cannot fill the void in the human heart. The only thing that can fill that void is Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:21).

Now, when the city of Babylon is plundered of her wealth, the high priest and priestesses murdered, the false religion exposed, and the city is burned to the ground the kings, the merchants and the sea-faring people lament greatly crying **Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city, for in one hour such wealth has been laid waste.** And we find that it is the Lord God who judges her but the executioners of His judgment are the ten king-beast alliance (cf 17:16). So, something almost inexplicable is taking place. As

Satan's kingdom is almost realized it begins to crumble. The only way I can make sense of this is that Satan is trying to re-establish His kingdom and throne in the city of Jerusalem and so Babylon has to be destroyed. And so, if Jerusalem is to be his new central headquarters then he has to exterminate the Jews and so all the armies of the world will gather in *Harmageddon* for the great day of God almighty. But before we enter that awesome point in world history we wonder at the response of the kings, merchants, and sea-faring peoples to the destruction of Babylon. All three lament greatly, and last week we looked at the lament of the kings in verses 9-10 and we began the lament of the merchants in verses 11-13. Let's pick up with their continued lament in verses 14-17a.

Revelation 18:14 And the fruit of the lust of your soul departed from you, and every kind of luxury and the splendid things perished from you and they will in no way find them any longer.

Revelation 18:15 The merchants of these things, who grew rich from her will stand at a distance because the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning

Revelation 18:16 saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and (having been) covered in gold and precious stone and pearl,

Revelation 18:17a for [in] one hour such great wealth was made desolate."

What you need to take away from this is how devoted these people are to materialism. It is truly amazing how powerful the soul lusts for material wealth and how easily it can place total dependence on wealth. So that when these materials are destroyed it's like you pulled the carpet of life right out from under them and there's nothing left to stand on. So, this is it for them. They're banking everything on it. They've put all their eggs in one basket and so in one fell swoop everything goes out the window and it's devastating.

The fruit of the lust of your soul departed from you, that is, the motivation behind all the material wealth that you gained was the lust of your soul and now that material wealth has **departed. every kind of luxury and splendid things perished**, that's all the niceties, comforts of life, all the articles and cherished objects that the merchants possessed, **perished**. And **they will in no way find them any longer**. This is a double negative in the Greek, the strongest way you can say "no way" (the almost identical phrase is used six more times in verses 21-23). They will never have luxurious or splendid items again. We can derive from this that neither Sheol nor the lake of fire is in any way a luxurious or splendid place.

Like the kings of the earth the **merchants...will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment**. So, they will not get close to the burning city for fear of being caught up in **her torment**. And they will **weep and mourn saying, “Woe, woe, the great city**. They say the same thing about the city that the kings said about the city. From their perspective this is horrible and from their perspective **the city is great**, but in reality it only appeared to be **great**. Their evaluation of the city is only surface. They think she is **great** because of her adornment, **clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and gold and precious stones and pearls**. Excessive luxury probably derived from the adherents to the false religion who were deceived as well as through the tremendously profitable economic system under the Antichrist. The description is very similar to that of the woman (who is the great city...17:18) in 17:4.

The dirge of the merchants ends with the reason this is so horrible, **because in one hour such great wealth was made desolate**. It will be a rapid destruction of the world’s central economic headquarters. They realize there is no possibility for recovery. What they do not realize is that the worst has yet to come; the finale of the Campaign of Armageddon (Rev 19), the Sheep-Goats judgment (Matt 25:31-46), and the eternal lake of fire (Rev 14:11).

The Lament of the Sea-Faring Peoples (18:17b-19)

Revelation 18:17b And every captain and everyone who sails from place to place and the sailor and as many as worked the sea, stood at a distance

Revelation 18:18 and called (imperfect) out seeing the smoke of her burning saying, “What is like the great city?” (see Rev 13:4 “Who is like the beast”).

Revelation 18:19 and they threw dust upon their heads and called out weeping and mourning saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, by which all having boats in the sea grew rich from her abundance, for [in] one hour she was made desolate.”

So, verse 17b shifts to the lament of a third group of people, the sea-faring peoples, those who make their living at sea. This includes the **captains**, those who travel by ship from place to place, fishermen, and those who dive for treasures, all who make their living by the sea. These too **stood at a distance** for fear of getting swept up into her torrential flames. And **they called out...saying “What is like the great city?”** The implied answer is nothing is **like** it. Their question is so ironic because in Rev 13:4 the earthdwellers asked, **“Who is like the beast?”** So, the beast and the great city are objects that evoke extreme awe, devotion and worship. And while it is true that no one is **like the beast** and nothing is **like the great city** there are two things that are greater than both and to which

the beast and **great city** pale in comparison, that is “the Lamb of God” and “the new Jerusalem”. So, the beast and the great city counterfeit the Lamb and the new Jerusalem. The difference is that the beast and great city only appear great on the surface to sinful humanity whereas the Lamb and the new Jerusalem truly are great.

and they threw dust upon their heads, a familiar OT act that symbolized extreme grief and mourning (Job 2:12; Josh 7:6). They too **weep and mourn** because of their great material loss. And they say something similar to the kings and the merchants, “**Woe, woe, the great city...for in one hour she was made desolate**. This is horrible for them. All who had **boats in the sea grew rich from her abundance**. So, whatever economic system is centered in Babylon it is tremendously profitable and these sea-faring people have leached all their wealth **from her**.

Now, before we turn to the response in heaven I want you to imagine an economic collapse, the central headquarters, we might call it Wall Street, collapsing, and at the same time all your materials, everything you possess going up in flames. Your cars, your home, including all the amenities; air conditioner to keep you cool in the summer, refrigerator to keep your food, stoves to cook on, couches to sit on, beds to sleep on, computers to play on, lamps to give light, CD players to listen to music, TV’s to watch, porches to sit on, old pictures to thumb through, all of it, burned up with no chance of recovery. Would you mourn at such losses? What would you possess? Would you possess eternal life, something which cannot be burned by fire? Would you possess rewards which cannot be burned by fire? I can’t think of anything else that can survive forever. But two things can; eternal life and rewards. Now, eternal life is a gift that can only be received one way, Jesus said,

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Eternal life is a gift received through faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Faith is simple trust, reliance, confidence in Jesus Christ, the object of our faith. Faith that results in the bestowal of eternal life must have the person of Jesus Christ as the object; the Jesus Christ who died for our sins and was raised on the third day. No other object has the ability to save, only the person of Jesus Christ. He is a divine person, eternal, having all the attributes of God, He came into history through the virgin birth, taking to Himself true humanity without any personal sins or a sin nature. He lived His whole life without

committing personal sin of any kind. This qualified Him to die not on the cross for sin, not His but ours. Since He was God He died for the sin of the whole world. So, Peter says “He died once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God” (1 Pt 3:18). Faith in that person results in the bestowal of eternal life. “For by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). It is the salvation that comes by grace through faith that is the gift but we are responsible for the faith. Now, that’s how one acquires this imperishable quality of life. Do you possess eternal life? Some people live their whole lives doubting whether they have it and hoping that when they die they will go to heaven, but never knowing for sure. Can you know that you have it? 1 John 5:13 “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” So, you can know. How can you know? By answering one question: “Have I believed that Jesus is the Son of God?” If you have believed then God’s word promises that you have eternal life. So, assurance of salvation, knowing for certain that you have eternal life is built on faith in God’s promises. Can I lose eternal life? Well, that’s a contradiction of terms. If you could lose eternal life then it would not be eternal to begin with. Now, there are many who make faith the basis of salvation, that is, they think their faith saved them. Now, that’s an unbiblical idea. And, of course, if it is your faith that saved you then what would happen if you lost your faith? Well, you’d lose your salvation. But the Bible is clear that faith is not the basis of salvation, faith doesn’t save. The basis of salvation in the Bible is God’s grace displayed supremely in sending His unique Son to die on the cross for the whole world. The benefits Christ generated at the cross are available to all men. So, grace is the basis upon which salvation was provided for the whole world. Faith is the means through which salvation is applied to the individual. So, faith doesn’t save, Christ saves.

God = the source of salvation (John 3:16)

Christ = the author of salvation (Heb 2:10)

grace = the basis of salvation (Eph 2:8-9)

faith = the means of salvation (Eph 2:8-9)

Now, that’s one eternal thing that you possess if all your material is burned up. Now, if you possess eternal life, that’s not the end of the ball game, there’s more, there is also the enjoying of eternal life, or taking hold of eternal life, that is, enjoying the abundant life. Jesus said,

John 10:10 I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.

Jesus came for two reasons: “that they may have life”, that is, eternal life, that we might possess it through faith in Him. But He also came that we might have eternal life abundantly, that is, that we would enjoy our eternal life. Paul said it this way to Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...” (1 Tim 6:12). Now, Timothy already possessed eternal life but he also needed to “take hold of the eternal life”, that is, start living out and enjoying the abundant eternal life, that is, living life by faith and not by sight, fighting the good fight of faith. There is a struggle going on here between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. Life by the Spirit is a life of faith, trusting in God’s provision and obeying His commandments. Now, here is where we enter in upon the right understanding of material things, objects, stuff. And I want to take you to something Jesus said about God and wealth. Jesus is talking about the life of a disciple, so these are genuine believers, not unbelievers. If a person hasn’t believed in Christ then this material is completely irrelevant to them. This is solely for believers, those who *possess* eternal life.

Matthew 6:19-24 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where *moth* and *rust* destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither *moth* nor *rust* destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Jesus begins in verse 19 with a discussion of where we are storing wealth. It’s quite clear that there is only one place you can build wealth. That’s on earth. But there are two location where we can store wealth. Either on earth or in heaven. And the command is to store our wealth in heaven and the reasons are quite clear. If we store our wealth on earth they will ultimately be destroyed and thieves continually break in and steal it. It doesn’t last and it’s difficult to keep. Everyone knows this because people everywhere are after the wealth of others. They’ll do anything to get a piece of it. Now, the issue here in the overall is priorities, the priority of serving God in the believer’s life, the singleness of devotion to God. Now, there is nothing wrong with building wealth in this world. The issue is where you store the wealth. In other words, what is the wealth being used for? Is it being used to serve God or self? So, the issue is how and where our wealth is being used.

If it is being used to serve self then wealth has taken the place of God and no one can serve two masters the verse says, it's even brought to the level of hatred. So, if you're storing up wealth here on earth then you might want to re-evaluate because that is not going to last, it is not eternal in value.¹ Now, this is not to say that wealth cannot be stored up for a period of time to be used to serve God at the proper time. The NT is clear that a proper way of giving is storing away so that when a need arises we have ample ability to supply the need (1 Cor 16:2). Once we store away we need to be sensitive to needs and not close our hearts to brothers who have genuine needs (1 John 3:17). So, wealth can be stored up only for self and this is what Jesus is condemning for His disciples. On the other hand, wealth can be used to serve God and when we do this we are storing up for ourselves wealth in heaven. We would call it rewards. Now, these are lasting things, eternal things that don't rust, can't be destroyed and can't be stolen. We'd say these are the best investments we will ever make. We can't lose when we store our wealth in heaven. So, the question for each of us is, "no matter our financial status, where are we storing our wealth?" Your building it here on earth, where are you storing it? What are you pouring your money into? And the answer to that question will help you determine whether you are serving God or wealth. We are all responsible to give in proportion to how God has prospered us (1 Cor 16:2). Now, a brief comment on the spiritual gift of giving. Some have this gift but not all. Some wealthy people may have this gift and some poor people may have it but the thing that marks a person who has this gift is not how much he has but his ability and willingness to give a much larger proportion of his wealth to the service of God. Now, I'm not going to ever tell you where or how to spend your money to serve God. Of course, if you are burdened to give some money I could maybe give you some ideas, areas of needs and doctrinal information about people or organizations to help you decide where to give your money. See, one thing that is very important when giving is knowing where the money is going, knowing the organization or church and what they believe because you want to make sure you are not sharing in the support of anti-biblical programs (2 John 10, 11) and you want to know that your money is being spent resourcefully and responsibly. It's your responsibility to figure these things out and I'm here to help you sort that out if you want. It's my desire that giving would be a joy for you and not a burden. I should remind you that there are times in our lives when it's not right to give because we are in debt and we can't even support our families and at those times we need some serious training in financial responsibility, getting help from those who are financially responsible in the church so we can get our finances under control. I should also mention that there is nothing wrong with investing your money in order to profit. In fact, that is wise, if wisely invested and the profit can be used to serve God and build rewards in heaven. So, that should summarize for you some of the basics on

building wealth and storing wealth. In our context you can see clearly the mentality of the kings, merchants, and sea-faring peoples toward wealth. They clearly serve it and not God and so when Babylon burns and entire economic system with it in just one hour, their response is one of great mourning and wailing. But now let's turn to the opposite response in heaven in Rev 18:20-24.

Rejoice Heavens! (18:20-24)

Revelation 18:20 Rejoice over her heaven, and saints and apostles and prophets, for God has judged your judgment on her.

Revelation 18:21 And a mighty angel lifted up a stone like (hos) a great millstone and threw it into the sea saying, "In this way, with violence she will be thrown down, Babylon the great city,

and in no way will she be found any longer."

Revelation 18:22 And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters

**will in no way be heard in you any longer,
and no craftsman of any craft**

**will in any way be found in you any longer,
and the sound of millstone**

**will in no way be heard in you any longer,
Revelation 18:23 and the light of a lamp**

**will in no way shine in you any longer,
and the voice of a bridegroom and bride**

**will in no way be heard in you any longer,
for your merchants were the chiefs of the earth, for by your drugs all the nations
have been deceived,**

**Revelation 18:24 and in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and all those
murdered upon the earth.**

These last verses describe the total destruction of the final form of the world system. Now, this is something to rejoice about because we have been called out of the world system and the world system persecutes those identified with Christ and so heaven is commanded to rejoice not because she does not want to but because now is the time to rejoice. Probably the rejoicing in heaven in Rev 19:1-6 is the heavenly response to this command.

Those in heaven include **saints**, a designation of all believers, both Old and New Testaments, not a special set of extra-holy people. All who have believed are rightly called **saints**. So, this supports our position here at the Bible Church that all saints of all ages are presently in heaven at this future time though not all are yet in resurrection bodies, At this point only the church saints are resurrected. Also, included among the **saints** are two special classes, **apostles and prophets**. **Apostles** are those “sent out”, “messengers”, particularly those who witnessed the resurrection (1st class of apostles...there are three classes of apostles in the Bible, see Ephesians, Lesson 2: Prologue). So, this refers to the 12. The **prophets** here are NT **prophets** and their function was to receive divine revelation and communicate it, teach it to others. They are all ready to come back with the Lord in chapter 19.

The reason they should **rejoice** is because **your judgment has been judged on her**. The sense is that the judgment that the saints, apostles and prophets thought was appropriate is appropriate according to the divine standard, that standard is *lex talionis*, “the law of retaliation” which states eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

In verse 21 the manner of her destruction is described. **And a mighty angel lifted up a stone like (hos) a great millstone and threw it into the sea saying, "In this way, with violence she will be thrown down, Babylon the great city, and in no way will she be found any longer."** The picture is very graphic. Babylon is like **a great stone being cast into the sea**, never to be seen again. The **stone** is not small but huge, like **a great millstone**. This was the kind of millstone turned by a donkey, about four to five feet in diameter, twelve inches thick and weighing thousands of pounds. And so, of course, it would require **a mighty angel** to lift such a stone and when he does he **casts it into the sea** (cf Jer 51:63ff). It's **in this way** that **Babylon, the great city** will be destroyed. It's a violent destruction. The picture is of a rush of mighty armies overtaking her in a very short period of time. **And she will in no way be found any longer**. She is like a huge stone that falls in to the ocean and disappears beneath the surface. This descriptive phrase **she will in no way be found any longer** is to be taken seriously and it is something for the saints to rejoice about. This phrase is used seven times in this chapter (14, 21-23) and seven is the perfect number and so this will be a perfect judgment, not one element of the Babylonian system of religion will remain, not one element of the corrupt economic system of the beast will remain. So, we're not just talking about physical destruction of a city, we're talking about the annihilation of an economic philosophy and a religious philosophy. The destruction of ideas, people who hold these ideas, materials that express these ideas, everything. So, when I say destruction I'm talking about absolute destruction.

Now, in verses 22-23 John sees how absolute the destruction is. **And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters will in no way be heard in you any longer, and no craftsman of any craft will in any way be found in you any longer, and the sound of millstone will in no way be heard in you any longer, and the light of a lamp will in no way shine in you any longer, and the voice of a bridegroom and bride will in no way be heard in you any longer.** The absence of three things: sound, light, and joy. Most of the descriptions are of the absence of all **sounds** that come from a thriving metropolis, the sound of music, the sound of people working, the sound of joy. The bustling sounds of a thriving metropolis will be silenced. The *first* group of sounds are all related to music. Music is a source of entertainment and brings joy to the soul. But there will be no more Broadway musicals in Babylon. *Second*, we have the absence of **craftsmen**. These are the people who shape the precious articles of gold, silver, wood, and precious fabrics, et. al. into the world's most valuable items. The sound of their working will disappear from Babylon. *Third*, **the sound of the millstone**, a common device in John's day. This would be akin to the daily sound of business. It will vanish. *Fourth*, in verse 23, **the light of a lamp will in no way shine**, the lights will be out, no streetlights to illumine one's way. The word refers even to the smallest light such as a candle. None will be found. *Finally*, the **voice of a bridegroom and bride will in no way be heard any longer**. The joy of a bridegroom and bride will come to a halt as it did in the days of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Three reasons are given for such absolute destruction in verses 23-24. *First*, **because your merchants were the chiefs of the earth**. The phrase has force of arrogance. They were (imperfect voice) arrogant because of the wealth they had drawn from Babylon. The *second* reason is **because by your drugs (or sorceries) all the nations have been deceived**. This refers to all the mystical ritual often accompanied with drugs that are used to **deceive the nations**. By this time the ancient Babylonian system of religion will have infected **all the nations**. The *third* reason is given in verse 24, **and in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and all those murdered upon the earth**. Ultimately, Babylon will pay for her bloodletting, the murdering of prophets and saints and many more. She will pay for her murders. God will make everything right and if you are a believer in Jesus Christ you will one day receive this command in heaven, to rejoice **heaven and saints and apostles and prophets for God has judged your judgment on her**. What you thought should happen to her will happen. And in chapter 19:1 we will all obey this commandment and erupt with praise to the living God, for He who has judged her is strong. Let us store up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not decay and thieves do not break in and steal. And may we not only possess eternal life but may we take hold of it and enjoy the abundant life Christ came to impart.

ⁱ Even when wealth has been passed on to our children we cannot guarantee it will be used in responsible service to God. Many an inheritance has been wasted. What parents must do is raise their children to be responsible workers and handlers of money.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)