

God Will Avenge

Revelation 18

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In the previous message from Revelation 17 (entitled “**War against The Lamb**”ⁱ) we studied the connection between chapters 17 and 18. In Revelation 17, “Babylon the Great” is a religious system; in chapter 18, Babylon is a rebellious city. But the last verse in chapter 17 shows that these two entities are connected: **“And the woman which you saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”** Yet, as a religious entity, that woman is even now riding the beast of the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 17:1-6). Revelation 17:9-10 explains that five of these kingdoms were already passed when this was written. (These appear to refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes-Persians and Greece.) The sixth kingdom (Rome) existed at the time John was writing. And by comparing the books of Daniel and Revelation, it appears that the seventh kingdom will be a form of a revived Roman empire. The eighth kingdom will be the kingdom of Antichrist. In Revelation 18, we learn that God will avenge His people; He will destroy this sinful world system. So choose you this day whom you will serve.

Two Cities

Across the ages, scholars such as Augustine, have noted the reality of two cities: The City of God and the City of this world. Each one of us is a citizen of one or the other. One is the city of godly faith; the other is a city of gross folly. The ultimate expression of the City of God is the new, heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2, 10). The ultimate expression of the City of this world is the Babylon described in Revelation 18. Every one of us must take stock of his or her citizenship and **“choose you this day whom you will serve”** (Joshua 24:15). One city is of faithful Abel, the other of cursed Cain. The godly line of faith, evident in Abraham, is explained in the Scriptures in strong contrast to the fury of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Even those dwelling in tents longed for **“a city which has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God”** (Hebrews 11:8-10). Foolish and self-exalting Babylon believes that she sits as a queen and **“shall see no sorrow”** (Revelation 18:7-8); but she shall be destroyed in a single day. The Apostle Paul reminded all the saints of all the ages: **“For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Philippians 3:20). Understanding this brings every one of us to the point of decision: Choose you this day whom you will serve.

The Angelic Announcement

In Revelation 16:10, we learned that the fifth angel will pour out his bowl upon the capital city of the Antichrist. Deep darkness will result as the inhabitants gnaw their tongues for pain. In your mind’s eye, try to imagine what it will be like when Revelation 18:1-2 is fulfilled: **“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”** The brilliant appearance of that angel, coupled with that declaration of doom for the city will bring every inhabitant to the point of decision: choose you this day whom you will serve. Those who are in bondage, signified by the mark of the beast, will already be doomed (Revelation 17:8). Many who refuse to reject their faith in Christ will be martyred (Revelation 18:24). Revelation 17:1-2 describes the divine sentence that will result in the physical devastation of the Antichrist’s capital city: Babylon the Great. Once a great city, Babylon will be reduced to the spooky haunt of demons and buzzards. Some see this city of Babylon as entirely symbolic of Rome or Jerusalem. Others think that it might refer to one of those actual cities. John MacArthur and others make a strong case that the Babylon of Revelation 18 will be a physical city on the Euphrates.ⁱⁱ

Why Will Babylon Be Judged?

This Babylon will be the ultimate expression of this world system. Its wisdom will be “earthly, sensual and devilish” (James 3:15). It will be full of the works of the flesh described in Galatians 5:19-21, “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies...” In all its humanistic yet demonic glory, it will be the ultimate embodiment of “...all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

The kings of the earth will become drunken and tipsy with her spiritual idolatry. But all the while, the merchants of this world will enrich themselves through the city’s sensual pleasure. Verse 7 explains that she will glorify herself and live sensuously; Babylon will exalt herself as the queen city who will never be widowed and never know sorrow. In a dense description of materialism, verses 12-14 describe her writhing covetousness:

“The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine [thyme, scented] wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after...”

Verses 23-24 point out that, led and promoted by the Antichrist, Babylon’s merchants will be the great men of the earth. They will use sorcery drugsⁱⁱⁱ to deceive the people of the world with an altered state of reality. But worst of all this city is the ultimate expression of “The City of the world” responsible for the bloody death of prophets, saints and other members of the human race. Verse 5 expresses it this way: “**her sins have reached unto heaven.**” Verse 18 describes this destruction as “burning” and verse 21 describes a massive tsunami that will follow. In Revelation 18, we learn that God will avenge His people; He will destroy this sinful world system. So choose you this day whom you will serve.

Who Will Judge Babylon?

Verse 5 declares that “**God has remembered her iniquities.**” Verse 8 describes it this way: “**Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, [pestilent] death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her.**” All the believers in heaven and earth who have waited and prayed will see the answer to their prayer, “**How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**” (Revelation 6:10). Revelation 18:20 commands, “**Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you on her.**” In Revelation 18, we learn that God will avenge His people; He will destroy this sinful world system. So choose you this day whom you will serve.

How Will the Inhabitants of the Earth Respond?

Proverbs 28:18 explains, “**Whoso walks uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once [suddenly]**” (Proverbs 28:18). And so it will be with city of Babylon. In summary fashion, Revelation 18:9-19 describes the mournful lamentations of kings, merchants and mariners. The mariners’ lament will be typical of all: “**For in one hour so great riches is come to naught. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!**”

And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate” (Revelation 18:17-19). Those who chose the mammon of materialism will be stunned by the destruction of their chief idol, Babylon. All the objects of their lusts and sensual greed will be destroyed by the God who avenges His own.

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How Should Believers Respond?

1. Remember how you became a citizen of heaven

Those who are citizens of the heavenly city know that this world is not their home, they are just “a passin’ through.” They know that they are “in the world” but not “of the world” (just as Jesus Christ is “not of this world” (John 17:14-16). How could these human beings – born as God’s image-bearers and yet as sinners in this lost world – not be “of this world?” Hebrews 11 describes their transformation when they embraced God’s promises:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.”
(Hebrews 11:13-16)

Those who have embraced the promises of God have been transformed from citizens of the City of the world to become citizens of The City of God. Have you taken hold of God’s promises this way? His chief promise is that the perfect life, substitutionary death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ bodily from the grave will save you. Will you embrace the Gospel and be saved? Those who have placed their faith in His promise know that the Lord has delivered them from the power of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). And now they are strangers and pilgrims who are in this world, but not of this world.

2. Come Out from Wickedness, Materialism and Unbelief

The foremost command to believers in Revelation 18 is this: **“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities”** (Revelation 18:4-5)

Jesus said, **“You cannot serve God and mammon”** (Matthew 6:24); you will hate the one if you love the other. This is why John wrote, **“Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”** (1 John 2:15). James wrote, **“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”** (James 4:4). Don’t deceive yourself. As Bob Jones, Sr. used to say, *“It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.”* This passage speaks to us like the angel speaking to Lot at Sodom, **“GET OUT!”** Don’t be a partaker of her sins.

How would you test yourself using Revelation 18? Go back through the list of things that describe the writhing covetousness of Babylon and ask yourself the simple question: Do I live for these? Is this my

heart's desire? Do I desire the world's sensual pleasures and even long to have slaves who will do my bidding? Am I living for my nerve-endings or what is never-ending? Do you long to fulfill your fantasies fueled by pornography and internet videos? Are you longing even now to get away from here so that you can indulge your secret sins? Remember Paul's admonitions to **"Flee youthful lusts, but follow after righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"** (2

Page | 4 Timothy 2:22, see 1 Timothy 6:11).

It may be that someone who is reading this thinks that this is a narrow-minded way to look at Christianity. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul said that you would say, according to 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1. But he pointed out that he was not the narrow-minded one; they were. They were narrow-minded about the fabulous promises of God, **"You are the temple of the Living God... I will dwell in them and walk in them and I will be their God and they will be my people... And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty!"** (2 Corinthians 6:16-18). How would we use these promises? **"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"** (2 Corinthians 7:1). Embracing those promises brought you out of the kingdom of darkness. Using these promises will cleanse you from the sensual materialism of Babylon all around us. So, if you believe these promises, what should you do? Paul answered the question from the congregation at Corinth:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

3. Rejoice with all the saints of heaven and earth

"Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Revelation 18:20). Will you rejoice when God says rejoice? Will you make merry over the coming destruction of all this materialism? The saints of heaven, the apostles and prophets will rejoice. Why? God will avenge!

In Revelation 18, we learn that God will avenge His people; He will destroy this sinful world system. So choose you this day whom you will serve.

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<https://www.cbfindlay.org/god-will-avenge/>



ⁱ Accessed at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/war-against-the-lamb/>

ⁱⁱ MacArthur appeals for a comparison of Revelation 17:1 with Jeremiah 51:13 and Rev. 17:2,4 with Jeremiah 51:7. Also Revelation 18:7 with Isaiah 47:5, Revelation 18:2 with Isaiah 13:21 and Jeremiah 51:8; Revelation 18:4 with Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45; Revelation 18:5 with Jeremiah 51:9, and Revelation 18:6 with Jeremiah 50:15; 51:24; Revelation 18:21 with Jeremiah 51:63-64. Also, he notes that the destruction of Babylon (in Revelation 18:10, 18, 21) indicates that it is an actual city. (John MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary, Revelation 12-22*, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2000, p. 167)

ⁱⁱⁱ "Sorceries" translates the Greek word [pharmakeia] from which we get our word "pharmacy"