

Revelation 18:9-24 **Two Responses to Babylon's Fall**

Well let's open our Bibles please to the book of Revelation, chapter 18. We're going to be reading together the entire chapter, although the focus of our study is going to be on verses 9 to 24. So Revelation chapter 18, beginning at verse 1:

“¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. ² 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. ³ For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

“⁴ 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. ⁵ For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. ⁷ How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. ⁸ Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

“⁹ And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: ¹² the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, ¹⁶ and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! ¹⁷ For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, ¹⁸ and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

“²¹ And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. ²² And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; ²³ and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

The book of Revelation is a book that sets forth and describes the spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan. It tells us that Christ will utterly defeat Satan and his helpers, and we are seeing that defeat set before us in chapters 17 and 18.

In chapter 17, we saw the defeat of the beast, which represents anti-Christian civil government, and we saw the defeat of Babylon, which represents anti-Christian society. But chapter 18 revisits and it greatly expands the description of the defeat of Babylon that was given to us in chapter 17 and in verse 16.

Here in chapter 18, we are told a great deal about the character of Babylon, the evil of Babylon, and the downfall of Babylon. Last week, we saw the exhortation that was given to the saints to separate themselves from Babylon, in verses 1 to 8.

Babylon calls upon people to worship money and material wealth, and to make a god out of luxury and self-indulgence and prideful self-exaltation. Babylon calls upon people to compromise and sacrifice every principle of Christian morality, and every point of Christian obedience, in order to obtain wealth and the esteem of the society. The idolatry of wealth and all it can purchase is an act of spiritual fornication, and it is a violation of the First Commandment to have no god beside the God of the Scriptures.

Therefore, God calls His saints to come out of Babylon. And what it means to come out of Babylon is that Christians must refuse to compromise with any demands the world makes upon them to violate any Christian principle in order to be employed, in order to do business, or in order to acquire wealth. Anything that would involve them in the compromise of any of the Ten Commandments must be rejected and withdrawn from, no matter how lucrative it might be, and no matter how great their need for money is. God will provide for His people without involving them in sin in order to do it. Only by carefully observing these principles can the Christian escape the wrath of God that falls upon Babylon and all who commit fornication with it.

So then, last week we saw the exhortation to the saints to separate themselves from Babylon in verses 1 through 8. Now today, we want to see the anguish of the ungodly over the fall of Babylon in verses 9 to 19, and we're going to look at the rejoicing of believers over the fall of Babylon in verses 20 to 24. Here are two radically different perspectives on the destruction of the very heart of anti-Christian society. The heart and soul of anti-Christian society is its economic activity, and everything revolves around its idolatry of wealth.

When the economic function of society is destroyed, when the money and the banking system collapse, and when commerce comes to a grinding halt, society will entirely cease to function. Death and mourning and famine follow, as verse 8 told us last week. Anti-Christian society is going to collapse under the wrath of God, and it's going to collapse at the hand of the beast.

Now when the beast destroys Babylon, which we saw occurring back in chapter 17, by decimating its economic system, as we see in chapter 18, it will have effectively destroyed itself as well. Because anti-Christian government cannot function for long if it doesn't have society's economic activity to provide it with tax revenue to pay its bills.

And so even though Antichrist and his one-world coalition of governments somehow saw the economic powers of society to be a sufficient threat that they felt the need to destroy them, once they have destroyed them, they recoil in horror over what they have done, and begin to mourn over the devastation that they have wrought upon their own best interest when they destroyed Babylon. To obtain their victory over their perceived enemy, they wound up destroying themselves in the process, and too late they realize that, and they begin to mourn for having destroyed Babylon.

But for the believers, it is an entirely different story. When the anti-Christian forces in this world that previously had been united in persecuting the church, now turn on each other and destroy one another, this brings relief to the believer, and it brings joy to the believer as he sees the justice of God visited upon the wicked for their persecution of believers.

Back in chapter 11 in verses 9 and 10, we saw the wicked rejoicing as they saw the believers destroyed. And now it is the turn of the believers to rejoice in seeing the wicked destroyed by the Lord God visiting judgment upon them.

But the difference is this: the victory of the world over the believers is only temporary. Remember, symbolically it was represented by three and a half days. But the victory of believers over the wicked is everlasting, permanent, and eternal. Babylon will never rise again to persecute the church. At the end of this age, it will be destroyed forever. Well then, this is the broad outline of the section before us. Let us consider it together in further detail.

In the first place then this morning, let us consider together the anguish of the ungodly over the fall of Babylon.

The anguish of the ungodly over the fall of Babylon is recorded for us in verses 9 through 19. Here in this section, verses 9 to 19, we see the despair and the self-pity of the kings, and of the merchants, and of the shippers of merchandise, over the tremendous economic loss they sustain when Babylon falls and her economic system is destroyed.

Now the destruction of Babylon and her economic system is foreshadowed in the Old Testament and described by the downfall of the city of Tyre. We're not going to take the time, but I would encourage you to go back and read Ezekiel chapter 26, chapter 27, and chapter 28. And what you will see as you read Ezekiel 26, 27, and 28, about the downfall of the city of Tyre in the Old Testament, is that the language of Revelation 18 is borrowed directly out of it and implanted right here in this chapter, to describe the downfall of Babylon.

Now Tyre was an economic powerhouse in its day, a city that was renowned for trade and wealth and luxury. Tyre was actually a city that sat on an island just off the coast of Phoenicia in the Mediterranean Sea, and her trade was conducted by ships, and her merchants and her king were wealthy beyond imagination.

But Tyre was an exceedingly wicked city and society, and God pronounced His judgment upon it with the same terminology that is applied to Babylon in Revelation chapter 18. The downfall of Tyre and those who mourned over its destruction model the downfall and the lamentation of those who mourn over the final destruction of this world's economic system at the end of this age.

Now this anguish over the fall of Babylon is expressed by three groups of people, and as these three groups see the destruction of their god of materialism and wealth and luxury, their whole world collapses, their hope is shattered, their future's filled with despair, and they weep and they mourn—not for Babylon, but for themselves because of the tremendous personal loss that they are experiencing. It is a very selfish weeping and mourning.

Notice then first of all, the anguish of the kings. The anguish of the kings is in verses 9 to 10. Notice verse 9: "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her," that is, with Babylon, "shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come."

Now when you see the god that you trusted in, and the god you placed all your hope and confidence in, destroyed before your very eyes, it is a heart-crushing experience. The kings of the earth, who in concert with the Antichrist destroyed Babylon, now weep over what they have done, in grief and regret.

You know, it's kind of like a jealous husband who kills his wife in a fit of anger because he suspects she has interest in someone else, and then after he's done that, he realizes he has destroyed the most wonderful wife he could have ever had, and is filled with grief and sorrow.

And so it is at the end of this age. For some reason, the kings of the earth, who worship the god of materialism and all the luxury it can produce, became suspicious of society's economic power and destroyed it, as we saw in chapter 17 and verse 16, but now they regret what they have lost, and they realize the damage they did to themselves in the process.

The kings of the earth sold their souls for economic wellbeing and luxury, and now they have lost all they sold their souls to obtain, and what makes it even more bitter, is that they lost it by their own hand. The speed at which the economic power and the wealth of the world is dismantled is breathtaking. Verse 10 indicates that symbolically speaking, it occurred in one hour; that is, it occurred in a very, very limited timeframe.

We can easily envision this when our own economic system in the United States was brought to a near collapse in 1929 in the Great Depression, and it was brought to a near collapse in 2007 and 2008 in the Great Recession, both of which were due to perverse government-imposed economic policies. Both the Great Depression and the Great Recession were a direct result of government policy decisions—laws that they passed and policies that they implemented.

And as the economic systems of the world become even more digitized and interdependent, and based on electronically generated currencies that have no real backing and are built on giant credit bubbles, it's easy to see how some government action could bring it all tumbling to the ground in a day. Multiple trillions of dollars of wealth could be destroyed in a short period of time by malicious government decisions and policies and laws and actions.

This has happened on a limited scale before, and it is going to happen on a worldwide scale in the future. And when it does, the kings of the earth will lament over the destruction that they caused to their own wellbeing, and see in that destruction the wrath of God against them. For they say, "in one hour thy judgment is come."

But we see in this section not only the anguish of the kings in verses 9 to 10, but secondly, the anguish of the merchants in verses 11 to 16. Now these are the businessmen who are financially bankrupted by the collapse and the ruin of the world's economy. Their merchandise is now useless because the collapse of the monetary system makes it impossible for anyone to be able to purchase their goods.

Notice verses 11 through 13. It says in verse 11, "And the merchants of the earth"—this is the second category; we've seen the kings, now we see the merchants. "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: ¹² the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, ¹³ 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."

Now verses 12 to 13 provide a representative list of merchandise that can no longer be purchased in the Babylonian economic system. The trade goods in this list are selected because they represent the kind of luxury goods that the world lives for and idolizes and worships. Ostentatious adornment, ostentatious apparel, extravagant decor, high cuisine, expensive transportation, and the use and abuse of servants—all these things come to an end.

Some commentators have noted that the first thing in this list is gold, because it was valued most highly. And the last thing on the list was the souls of men, because they was valued the least. Thus the priorities of Babylon.

And so because commerce is destroyed, access to luxury goods and the ability to purchase them has ended. Everyone is reduced to bare survival, and limited to the most basic goods to be able to stay alive.

Now notice verse 14: “And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.” And so all those material possessions that the world lusted after that are listed in verses 12 and 13—all those things that they lusted after and idolized are now completely gone.

Now notice verses 15 through verse 17a. Verse 15: “The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,¹⁶ and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!¹⁷ For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.”

The result of the destruction of the world’s economic system is that the merchants that were enriched by it are brokenhearted at their losses, their bankruptcy, and their poverty. All they lived for and all that they labored for is now gone, and it will never come back. They are utterly ruined, their god is dead, and their hope is destroyed.

That brings us then to the third group of mourners. We have seen the anguish of the kings; we have seen the anguish of the merchants; now notice thirdly, the anguish of the shippers. The anguish of the shippers is in verses 17b through verse 19. Notice verse 17b: “And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,¹⁸ and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!¹⁹ 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.”

Now here are represented all the suppliers of the merchants and the merchandise spoken of in verses 11 to 16. We have merchants and we have merchandise spoken of in verses 11 to 16, and

these shippers are the manufacturers and the suppliers of these goods, and they bring them into the city for the merchants to market and to sell.

Ships, of course, were the primary instruments of conveying goods to the merchants from their source of manufacture. The point is, the manufacturers and the shippers of the merchandise spoken of in verses 12 to 13 are also ruined in the fall of Babylon. Their cries of lamentation in verses 18 and 19 are not an expression of repentance, but cries of self-pity and sorrow over their economic ruin, because all they lived for is destroyed. They are brought from the pinnacle of wealth down to the pit of poverty. How are the mighty fallen!

Neither the kings nor the merchants nor the shippers are mourning and weeping over their sins. Instead, they weep and mourn out of self-pity and sorrow over the loss of their self-indulgent lifestyle, for which they had sacrificed every moral principle and even their own souls in order to obtain.

However, the people represented in these verses are about to lose something far more important than their material wealth. They are about to lose their souls. And yet, their obsession with their wealth and its loss makes them oblivious to the impending eternal judgment that is going to occur at a very short period of time, when Jesus returns. They are so obsessed with the things of this life that they cannot even think about the life to come, and whether they are ready to face God or not. The issues of time completely block out the thought of eternity.

And so the warning of this section to us is very clear. Keep the things of this world in their proper place in your priorities, so that even if you lost every material possession you have, you would continue to rejoice that you have a saved soul. You would continue to rejoice that you have forgiveness of your sins. You would continue to rejoice that you have Jesus Christ. You would continue to rejoice that you have the unsearchable riches of Christ. And you would continue to rejoice that you have eternal life. You would continue to rejoice because those things are the things of true worth and permanent value.

That's why Jesus says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal, but rather, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." And if our treasure is in heaven, our hearts are in heaven, and if things in this life come, or if things in this life go, it is of small moment to one whose heart is in heaven, and whose wealth is laid up in Christ.

So you can see by people's response to material goods who their god is. And when material goods are our god, we live and die on their coming and their going. But when God is our God, money may come in, money may go out, but we recognize its temporary nature, and its limited utility—it's just to take care of the things of our body until we get through this life. But the true riches are in Christ, in heaven, and laid up for the future. And that is where our heart is, and that's where our trust is. That's where our confidence is, and that's where our joy is.

Well that brings us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the anguish of the ungodly over the fall of Babylon, in the second place, notice the rejoicing of the believers over the fall of Babylon.

The rejoicing of the believers over the fall of Babylon is contained in verses 20 to 24. Just as the believers in the Old Testament rejoiced over the fall of Old Testament Babylon in Jeremiah chapter 51, so the New Testament believers will rejoice over the fall of spiritual Babylon at the end of this age. Now once again, we see tremendous parallels between the language in Jeremiah 51 over the fall of Old Testament Babylon, and the language that is used here in Revelation 18, over the fall of New Testament Babylon.

Now notice if you will verse 20. Here's a completely different reaction to the fall of Babylon that we have just seen. Verse 20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." And this rejoicing is something that God calls upon us to do, and He says, Those in heaven, rejoice, and those on earth, rejoice.

Now who are those in heaven that are rejoicing at this point? Well, if you'll turn back for just a moment to Revelation chapter 6, I'll remind you who they are. In Revelation chapter 6 and verse 9, it says, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." These are the martyrs that Babylon slaughtered.

"¹⁰and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." And then, of course, after that, vengeance is going to come.

Well, it's come. What was prayed for in Revelation chapter 6 by the martyred saints who have been slaughtered through the ages by anti-Christian society and who are in heaven, waiting justice to be exercised upon those who murdered them, God is now turning to them, to those in heaven, and He's saying, Rejoice!

But not only do we have part of the church in heaven, which is called the Church Triumphant, we also still have part of the church on earth, called the Church Militant, because for those in heaven, the battle's over, but for us on earth, we're still fighting. So he says in verse 20, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven"—that's the saints in chapter 6—"and ye holy apostles and prophets;"—those are the believers who are down on the earth, still laboring for the Lord. And he says to both of these groups of people, "God hath avenged you on her." So the reason for the rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon is that God has vindicated His saints and accomplished justice for them by punishing their persecutors.

Now, many Christians grow discouraged that the wicked seem to prosper so much, and that the wicked seem to prosper for so long. But in the end, their prosperity will do nothing to protect them from the wrath of God. And in the end, the wicked will be judged and punished for the evil that they have done, and the scales of justice will be balanced. And *then* the righteous will rejoice at the vindication of the justice of God and at the vindication of themselves by God as He justifies them, and as He condemns the wicked.

Now the righteous do not delight in Babylon's suffering because they are sadistic, but because Babylon's suffering is the manifestation of God's justice, and it is God's justice that they are rejoicing in. They are glad that God has defended the honor of His name. They are glad that God has defended the integrity of His law. They are glad that God has defended the truthfulness of the promises He has made, and that justice will prevail.

They rejoice because God has defended the honor of His name by not leaving sin unpunished and undealt with. They rejoice that God has demonstrated that His people were right all along in their belief and behavior, and that the false accusations and slanders lodged against them by the wicked were shown to be wrong.

So this rejoicing is a rejoicing over the vindication of the believers and the vindication of the justice and the righteousness of God. Whatever pain and suffering the wicked endure, they have earned that for themselves by their works. The wages of sin is death. And thus they are being paid what they have worked so hard to earn. God will not withhold from them their wages.

Now notice verse 21: "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." Now this imagery of a stone being cast into the sea as a symbol of God's judgment on Babylon is taken directly out of Jeremiah chapter 51, verses 60 to 64.

I'd like for you for a moment, if you would, turn please to Jeremiah chapter 51. Jeremiah in chapter 51 is prophesying of the downfall and the destruction of Old Testament Babylon, who came under Nebuchadnezzar and conquered Israel, captured her, and carried her away for 70 years to be in exile in Babylon. So this is the city.

Verse 60 of Jeremiah chapter 51: "So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. ⁶¹ And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; ⁶² then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. ⁶³ And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:"—that's the Euphrates River—" ⁶³ and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary." Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

So Jeremiah wrote the judgments against Babylon in a book, and he says to Seraiah his servant, Go to Babylon, read what's in the book, then take a rock and tie it to the book and throw the thing into the Euphrates River. And the point is, just as when a stone is thrown into the water it will never rise again or be seen again, so when Babylon falls, it will never rise again or be seen again. And what happened to Old Testament Babylon is going to happen to New Testament Babylon as well.

Please turn back to Revelation chapter 18. Here we have the imagery of the angel taking the millstone and throwing it into the sea, that is symbolic of the fact that when God takes Babylon down, New Testament Babylon, anti-Christian society with all of its worship of wealth and luxury, all of its culture and arts, all of its social institutions—when He takes all of that and He destroys it, it's not coming back. Ever.

Now notice verses 22 and 23a. It says, “²² And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; ²³ and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.”

Now the point of this extended description that I have just read to you of all of the things that will cease to exist in Babylon, is to show that there will be a complete collapse of the economic, the social, and the cultural functions of society when God's judgment falls upon it. For all intents and purposes, anti-Christian society will cease to function, and every aspect of life will grind to an absolute standstill. And so the judgment on Babylon will be complete.

Now this judgment falls upon Babylon for three reasons. First of all, it falls upon it because of its pride. Notice if you will verse 23b. It says, “*for*”—here's why all of this—“for thy merchants were the great men of the earth.” Now when it says “thy merchants were the great men of the earth,” the point that is being made here is that those who were at the pinnacle of economic wealth were focused on glorifying themselves as those to be admired and followed and worshiped; and the world admired and followed and worshiped them.

In no way did they see themselves—these great merchants, these phenomenally wealthy people of the earth—in no way did they see themselves as stewards entrusted with God's wealth, who were supposed to use it for God's glory. Instead, those at the pinnacle of the wealth of the world said, with Nebuchadnezzar of old, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”

And so as God looked at the pride that arose out of the economic excess of those who had overachieved in the accumulation of the wealth of this world, who saw their wealth as a commendation of themselves and an exaltation of their glory, and as a means to draw people to worship and follow them—for that reason, God brought judgment upon them.

The second reason God brought judgment is not only because of the pride that arose because of the wealth, but secondly, notice it was because of the sorceries. Verse 23, the last phrase: “for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” Now this word “sorceries” refers to all of the deceptions and all of the seductions that Babylon perpetrated in order to induce people to worship the God of material wealth.

Whatever it took to turn people away from the true God, and to entice people to worship a false god, that’s what Babylon did: through the drugs of godless, wicked entertainment; through the promotion of perverted immorality; through the engagement of satanic activity; or through the actual drugs of alcohol and opiates—Babylon has used a variety of tools to seduce the people by her sorceries, and to cause the nations of the earth to worship the god of this world.

So not only because of her pride, not only because of her seduction of people away from God to worship the god of materialism and all that it offers, but thirdly, God brought judgment upon Babylon because of her persecution of Christians. Notice verse 24: “And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

Now anti-Christian society not only pursues evil as hard as it can, as much as it can, and as fast as it can, but it is determined to destroy those who won’t. Anti-Christian society has always relentlessly persecuted and martyred Christians because they alone stand as a reproach to its wickedness. And thus you see the hostility towards Christianity in our society.

We stand up and we say, Wait a second. This is wrong, and this is wrong. And you need to stop doing *this*, and we need to start doing *this* and *this*, because these things are what are right. And we see the vicious hostility that rises against us for taking a stand against the wickedness of our society.

And thus, when Christians speak out against Babylon, Babylon slaughters the Christians. It’s been going on for centuries, it will continue to go on to the end, and it will be especially bad after Antichrist arises. All of the blood of all of the martyrs of all of the ages, from Abel till the end of time, will be required of Babylon. And she will be judged for all of the saints that have been persecuted and slaughtered.

And so, because of pride, because of seduction, and because of persecution, Babylon will be judged, and strong is the Lord God who judges her, as it says in verse 8 of this chapter.

So here in chapter 18, we see the sharpness of the contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. We live lives that are separated from Babylon, as verse 4 tells us. We are severely persecuted by Babylon, as verse 24 tells us. We rejoice at the fall of Babylon, as verse 20 tells us.

On the other hand, the world plunges into the midst of Babylon, and immerses herself in its mad worship of the god of wealth. The world practices all the sins of Babylon and traffics in all of

the evil that she offers as means of satisfaction and pleasure. And the world mourns the loss of Babylon.

So there's only two camps to be in. And the question is, Do you stand against Babylon, or do you stand with Babylon? Do you live lives that are separated from her sins and her idolatries, or do you participate in her sins and her idolatries? What do you aspire after as you go through this life? To be like the Hollywood people? Or to be like our Puritan forefathers?

Remember this—the world passes away, and the lusts thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Choose wisely. As verse 4 says, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

So we who are outside of Babylon, and thus persecuted by Babylon, wait for the destruction of Babylon. By faith we know that while Babylon is now riding the beast, and possesses tremendous power, yet one day God will bring her down to destruction. And we wait for that day, because that will be the day of our vindication. And instead of people worshiping the 500 richest people in the world, they'll be looking up to and admiring the godly people who lived in this world.

May we be among that number, as we self-consciously recognize the wealth of this world as being a pitiful substitute for the wealth of Jesus Christ. Let us esteem Him, pursue Him, and seek to acquire all of *Him* we can. And, yes, we've got to acquire a little wealth along the way in order to do that, but let's never forget what the true riches are, and what the temporary riches are. Shall we pray together.

Our Father, we're so grateful that you have given us the everlasting riches of Jesus Christ, and that all you have has been given to Him, and all He possesses has been given to us. Father, help us not to be dazzled by the wealth and the luxury and the opulence and the popularity of the godless in this world. Father, I pray that we would see Hollywood for the evil that it is in seducing people away from Christ, and as that which would create in us an idolatrous attachment to the glitter and the glamour of this world.

Father, I pray that you would cause us to be humble, serious, sincere Christians who seek Christ with all of our heart, and who have Him at the center of all of our affections and lives. Help us then to walk with Jesus, to live for Jesus, and to be able to say, For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Father, help us to keep our priorities straight, and help us to be revolted at the wickedness of Babylon. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.