

REVELATION – SERMON 71

EARTH WEEPS AS HEAVEN REJOICES

Revelation 18:9-24

INTRODUCTION

- As Bunyan's town of Vanity describes this evil world, its temptations and its opposition to God and his people, so the city of Babylon in Scripture describes the same great Satanic system which has corrupted the earth for the last 6000 years
- Revelation 17 depicts *religious* Babylon, which will reach its fullest manifestation in the ecumenical religious system that will pollute the earth following the rapture
- Revelation 18 depicts *commercial* Babylon, and this will become the global economic system of the final world empire under the rule of the Antichrist, centred in Rome
- The downfall of Babylon is one of the major events recorded in Revelation
- It will take place as the final seven vials/plagues are poured out immediately prior to the Second Coming of Christ
- It is the direct judgment of God for her wickedness (v.8)
- In our text we are shown two vastly different reactions to the fall of Babylon
- Some are devastated, while others are elated—It all depends on which kingdom one belongs to
- People demonstrate their allegiance by the way they respond to good and evil

- The wicked “hate the good, and love the evil” (Micah 3:1-2), while the righteous “abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9)
- For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Consider the fall of Babylon and the contrasting responses to it:

I. EARTH’S LAMENTATION AT BABYLON’S DESTRUCTION (9-19)

There are three groups that lament Babylon’s fall: the governmental world (9-10); the commercial world (11-17); the maritime world (17-19)

A. The monarchs’ lament (9-10)

1. At the pouring of the sixth vial, the kings of the whole world gather together to the battle of Armageddon (Psalm 2:2; Revelation 16:14)
2. It will be during this time they will see Babylon fall and they will join their lamentation
3. These leaders of nations who profited through the diabolical global economic system will be devastated to see its collapse
4. Note the various words of lamentation:
 - a. Bewail/weep (*klaio*) – to sob and wail aloud (vv.9,11,15,19)
 - b. Lament (*kopto*) – to beat the breast in grief (v.9)

c. Mourn (*pentheo*) – to grieve and wail (vv.11,15,19)

d. Alas, alas (*ouai, ouai*) – woe (vv.10,16,19)

B. The merchants' lament (11-17)

1. There is a list of twenty-eight items of merchandise, grouped in the following: 4,4,6,4,4,6

a. Four is the number of *earth*, six is the number of *man*

2. The investment market – gold, silver, precious stones, pearls

3. The commodities market – fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet

4. The materials market – thyine wood, ivory, most precious wood, brass, iron, marble

5. The luxury market – cinnamon, odours, ointments and frankincense

6. The food market – wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat

7. The beast and slave market – beasts, sheep, horses, chariots, slaves and souls of men

a. This can be further divided into three pairs – livestock, transportation, manpower

b. The word for “slaves” is *soma* (body) and “soul” is *psuche*

c. Today, “human trafficking generates an estimated US\$150 billion in profits

- d. Abortionists sell the body parts of the children they kill for many thousands of dollars
 - e. Rome merchandises the souls of men by claiming the power to rescue them from *purgatory* for a price
 - f. Much of the commercial world today regard their labouring workers as mere commodities
8. These were made rich by her (v.15)
9. They weep, not only for their loss, but “for the fear of her torment” (vv.10,15)
10. Consider some of the evils of modern commercialism (by William Newell, 1935)
- a. It enables man to avoid as far as possible God’s command to till the earth and to live by the sweat of his brow
 - b. It tends to unify the humanity that God has definitely divided into nations, for the very purpose of covering the earth with the spirit of self-confidence and rebellion as before Babel (Genesis 11)
 - c. It enables individuals, cities and nations to become unduly swollen with riches, begetting covetousness, which is idolatry
 - d. It is contrary to God’s will that each man live beneath ‘his own vine and fig-tree,’ content with such things as he has
 - e. It is an excuse most common in the thoughts of men for not serving God
 - f. It is atheistic; it is self-indulgent; it is self-confident

- g. It blots out real human ties (home, church or country)
- h. It brings spiritual deadness and insensibility as nothing else does

C. The mariners' lament (17-19)

1. The great commerce and trade system that relies on sea transport will come to an end
2. There are four types of mariners:
 - a. Every shipmaster
 - b. All the company in ships
 - c. Sailors
 - d. As many as trade by sea
3. Note that the shipping industry will suffer under the judgments of the tribulation (8:9; 16:3-4)
4. To throw dust upon the head is to express intense grief (Joshua 7:6; Job 2:12; Lamentations 2:10; Ezekiel 27:30)

II. HEAVEN'S JUBILATION AT BABYLON'S DESTRUCTION (20-24)

A. A call to rejoice (20)

1. The speaker is most likely the angel (v.4)
2. The earth-dwellers rejoiced when the two witnesses were slain by the beast (11:10), but at this moment they wail, while heaven rejoices

3. As when Satan was cast out of heaven (12:12), all of heaven again rejoices
4. The apostles and prophets are particularly called to rejoice, as those leaders of God's people throughout history have borne the brunt of Satanic persecution against the church
5. The reason to rejoice is that God has avenged his people (Romans 12:19)
6. The martyrs' prayer in 6:10 is answered
7. The song of rejoicing is detailed in the following chapter

B. Babylon's violent destruction (21-24)

1. There will be no more rising again – the great weight of the millstone emphasises that her fall is complete and permanent
2. There will be no more music – no joy
3. There will be no more industry
4. There will be no more light
5. There will be no more marriage – no love, no procreation, no future
6. There will be no more deception
 - a. Sorceries (*pharmakeia*) indicates witchcraft associated with drugs (9:21)
7. There will be no more righteous blood spilt

- a. From the very first martyr, Abel, she has been filling her cup with righteous blood, and continues to do so today (Matthew 23:35)
- b. That blood cries out from the ground unto heaven, and will soon be answered in divine wrath (Genesis 4:10)

CONCLUSION

1. How we react to the events in the world and in our lives shows what kingdom we belong to
2. What brings you joy? The things of this world, or the things of God?
3. The world rejoices to see sin and iniquity prevailing
4. But for the Christian, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psalm 119:136)
5. Many people today are like these kings, merchants and mariners, mourning over the economic downturn
6. Yet they fail to mourn over their sins against God (James 4:9; Matthew 5:4)
7. These verses highlight the great discord between God's holy throne in heaven, and the wicked state of the world in rebellion against God
8. Yet there is coming a day when the prayer will be answered: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)
9. Babylon traffics in men's souls

10. It is significant that in the list of 28 items of merchandise, gold is first, and the souls of men are last
11. The children of this world put little value on the soul, but it is more valuable than all the world (Mark 8:36)
12. The devil knows this, but do we?
13. Do we value our own souls? Do we value the souls of others?
(Proverbs 11:30)

Some men's ambition is art.
Some men's ambition is fame.
Some men's ambition is gold.
My ambition is the souls of men.

—William Booth, 1904