**April 8, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 18 of the Book of Revelation**

## The Fall of Babylon

Last week we studied the woman on the beast who was symbolic of a one world religion/government named Babylon that would emerge at some point in the 7 year revelation period.  At the end of chapter 17, an angel prophesied about the coming destruction of Babylon.  This week we see that the predicted destruction has occurred.  Biblical scholars debate whether Babylon is an actual city or is a symbolic representative of this false religion.  Of those who believe it is an actual city, some think this describes a future Rome while others think it is located in a different area since there are some references in the chapter to sea trade and Rome is not a port city.  While there is debate about the timing of chapter 18, the consensus is that at least some of this occurs at the end of the 7 year tribulation period.  One interesting theory is that the Babylon in chapter 18 is the successor to Babylon in chapter 17.  The idea is that much of the world will be part of an apostate church that is overthrown by the Antichrist at the halfway point of the tribulation period.  The final 42 months of the tribulation period marks the world being ruled by the Antichrist and False Prophet where all who do not worship the image of the beast will not be able to buy goods and services (see Daniel 9:25-27).  J. Hampton Keathley, III and David Guzik have provided commentary consistent with this theory.   Chapter 17 is seen as describing the religious Babylon while chapter 18 describes the commercial Babylon.  As you can see verses 11 through 19 of chapter 18 are devoted to the reaction of merchants to the destruction of wealth and commerce.    As we have seen previously in Revelation, actual historic events are often similar to the events that will happen during the tribulation.  Babylon rises as a power and under Nebuchadnezzar carries Judah into captivity.  Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC as prophesied in Isa 21:9.  Tyre was a Persian kingdom that was finally defeated by Alexander the Great in 332 BC.  Prophecy about the destruction of Tyre can be found in Ez. chapter 26.  Much like Babylon in Rev. chapter 18, chapter 27 titled A Lament for Tyre  is devoted to merchants lamenting their loss of commercial trade with Tyre.  As I read it, this chapter seems to start with the destruction of Babylon then in the middle it goes back to the prediction of a future destruction so it’s kind of hard to follow.

The chapter begins with an angel coming down from Heaven and it says that the angel had great power and the earth was lightened with his glory.  This is a description of an angel I don’t find in any other part of the Bible.  While  some writers believe this angel to actually be Jesus I’m not sure there is enough here to validate that.  One possible explanation is that the angel having just come from Heaven is reflecting the light of God similar to Moses after he descended from Mt. Sanai.  A reminder that the light we carry is not our own but it is a reflection of the light of Jesus.  The angel declares that Babylon has fallen and is now home to devils and evil spirits.  There is some indication that it has become a desolate place due to the destruction of life and vegetation during the tribulation.

Verse 4 seems to be a final appeal for people to be saved , similar to 14:7 or it may be an appeal for any Christians remaining on earth to leave, similar to Lott’s instruction to leave Sodom.  The next few verses describe how God’s wrath will be poured out.  Notice in verse 10 the destruction comes in 1 hour, similar to the swift judgment of Sodom & Gomorrah.  As mentioned earlier, the next several verses deal with merchants who are only in it for themselves.  A city is destroyed and their regret is lost income.  Apparently this future Babylon is the commercial hub of the world and other nations are dependent on its largesse.  This is somewhat reminiscent of the former Soviet Union with eastern bloc nations under its control.

In verse 20 all in Heaven are told to rejoice.  David Guzik puts it well “We don’t rejoice in the destruction the is the result of judgment.  Rather we rejoice in the righteous resolution God’s judgment brings.”  The chapter ends with a large millstone being thrown into the sea so that in addition to the city being burned, it is consumed by water, perhaps a tsunami.  Babylon has its roots in the tower of Babel described in Genesis which was an attempt by early man to establish a union of the world which God destroyed.  After thousands of years of human history, mankind reaches a similar perceived pinnacle resulting in God stepping in again to destroy man’s wicked creation.