**THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Don’t Let Our Lips and Our Life Preach Two Different Messages**

**THE FALL OF COMMERCIAL BABYLON**

* 1. Many scholars see the issue differently. Some point to two manifestations of Babylon, one ***religious*** and one ***commercial or material***.
  2. Others see the two Babylon’s as *one*, both being judged at the same time.
  3. There are definite similarities between Babylon as described in [**Revelation 17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1-18/s_1184001) and [**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001).
     1. Both Babylon’s are under the rule of Antichrist, and have ruling queens; both are filled with blasphemy; both hate the saints, and shed their blood; both are associates with kings in fornication; and both are under judgment and destroyed.
     2. ***BUT*** there are also some significant differences:
     3. [**Revelation 17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1-18/s_1184001) **- Babylon (**Spiritual**)**
        1. Harlot woman.
        2. Identified with Rome (inland).
        3. Woman, whore, mother.
        4. Guilty of religious abominations.
        5. Destroyed by a political power that previous supported her.
     4. [**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001) **- Babylon (**Commercial**)**
        1. Great city.
        2. Identified with a port city (coastal).
        3. Habitation, marketplace.
        4. Guilty of greed and self-indulgence.
        5. Destroyed by sudden act of God.
     5. It is best to see them as intertwined, yet somewhat distinct. *Religious* Babylon of [**Revelation 17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1-18/s_1184001) is judged at the *mid-point* of the seven-year period of tribulation and *Commercial* Babylon is judged at the *end of that period*.
  4. **Is Babylon of** [**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001) **a literal or symbolic city?**
     1. Some think it will be a future *rebuilt* Babylon on the Euphrates River in the Middle East. (*Today it is a desolate desert in modern day Iraq.)*
     2. Many years ago, Saddam Hussein was outspoken in his desire to resurrect the ruined city of Babylon in all of its glory. He failed, but it is conceivable that a rebuilt Babylon could be a world economic center, especially with the wealth of Mideast oil. But so far, Hussein or any other leader has not rebuilt Babylon.
     3. But most likely, commercial Babylon is symbolic, like religious Babylon. (Barnhouse) “When the Lord was here on earth He spoke of the great hatred that ‘the world’ had for Him and His own ([**John 15:18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/15/18/s_1012018)**,**[**19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/15/19/s_1012019)). What is this world but a combination of religion, government and commerce? In other words, Babylon in all its parts stands for that which Christ called ‘the world.’”
     4. (Johnson) “In portraying the destruction of a (symbolic) city, he describes God’s judgment on the great satanic system of evil that has corrupted the earth’s history.”
     5. (Walvoord) “In [**chapter 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001), the context seems to indicate that Babylon here is viewed in its political and economic character rather than its religious aspect.”

[**Revelation 18:1-3**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-3/s_1185001) **(NKJ) After these things I saw *another* angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the *earth was illuminated* with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”**

* 1. **Illuminated with his glory**: This angel **coming down from heaven** is so “fresh” from God’s presence that he glows.
     1. (Swete) “So recently has he come from the Presence (of God) that in passing he flings a broad belt of light across the dark earth.”
     2. (Walvoord) “The term ‘another’ (Gr., *allon*) makes it clear that this angel is the same in kind as the angel of [**17:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1/s_1184001).”
  2. **Become a dwelling place of demons**: A sad fate for a once-great city.
     1. (Mounce) This is “a prophetic picture of absolute desolation where the proud achievements of man become the demonic haunts of unclean and horrible creatures.”
  3. **Abundance of her luxury**: Babylon’s sin was not only idolatry (referred to with the term **fornication**), but also pride, greed, and selfishly held wealth.

**A call to God’s people to separate from Babylon.**

[**Revelation 18:4-5**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/4-5/s_1185004) **And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”**

* 1. **Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins**: It is inconceivable that a child of God could be a part of religious Babylon (though elements may creep in).
     1. But commercial Babylon, with its *materialistic* lure, is a constant threat to be guarded against.
  2. **Lest you receive of her plagues**: The warning is focused towards saints who are in the position Lot was in while he lived in the city of Sodom ([**Genesis 19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/19/1-38/s_19001)). These are God’s people in a place they shouldn’t be.
  3. **Come out of her**: The call to depart from Babylon and the *worldliness* that it represents is a theme repeated frequently in the Scriptures.
     1. [**Isaiah 52:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/52/11/s_731011) *Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.*
     2. [**Jeremiah 50:8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/50/8/s_795008)(NLT) **“But now, flee from Babylon! Leave the land of the Babylonians. Like male goats at the head of the flock, lead my people home again.**
     3. [**Jeremiah 51:45**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/51/45/s_796045)(KJ) ***My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord.***
     4. [**2 Corinthians 6:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2co/6/14/s_1084014)(NKJV) **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**
     5. [**Ephesians 5:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/eph/5/11/s_1102011)(NLT) ***Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them.***
  4. **For her sins have reached to heaven**: The sins of commercial Babylon have piled up like a tower — the tower of Babel.
  5. **God has remembered her iniquities**: This is the destiny of the materialistic world, but towards believers, God says,
     1. [**Hebrews 8:12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/heb/8/12/s_1141012) (NKJV) **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**

[**Revelation 18:5-8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/6-8/s_1185006)

1. **For her sins are piled as high as heaven,**
2. **and God *remembers* her evil deeds.**
3. **Do to her as she has done to others.**
4. **Double her penalty for all her evil deeds.**
5. **She brewed a cup of terror for others, so brew twice as much for her.**
6. **She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so match it now with torment and sorrow.**
7. **She boasted in her heart, ‘I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow, and I have no reason to mourn.’**
8. **Therefore, these plagues will overtake her in a single day — death and mourning and famine.**
9. **She will be completely consumed by fire, for the Lord God who judges her is mighty.”**
10. **Render to her just as she rendered to you**: The ancient Greek word for **render** (*apodidomi*) means literally “*to pay a debt*” or “*to give back that which is due*.” God will give Babylon exactly what she deserves.
11. **Repay her double according to her works… mix for her double**: Double restitution was required in the Old Testament in cases of theft [**Exodus 22:4-9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/exo/22/4-9/s_72004).
    1. This maybe a commentary on how Babylon has made her wealth — *through dishonest dealings.*
12. **Repay her double according to her works**: This passage presents a three-fold sin.
    1. First, *self-indulgence* (**lived luxuriously**).
    2. Second, *pride* (**glorified herself… sits as a queen**).
    3. Third, *avoidance of suffering* (**am no widow, and will not see sorrow**).
    4. All these things are characteristic of worldliness and materialism.
13. **Therefore her plagues will come in one day**: The destruction of commercial Babylon will come suddenly and with completeness (**utterly burned with fire**).

[**Revelation 18:9-10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/9-10/s_1185009) **“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’**

1. **Standing at distance for fear of her torment**: So great is the heat and **smoke of her burning** that these kings must stand **at a distance**.
   1. Some think this may be an indication that nuclear weapons are used in the judgment of these commercial centers.
2. **Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!** (Swete) “With a touch of grim humour he paints them as standing at a safe distance from the inferno, and contenting themselves with idle lamentations.”

[**Revelation 18:11-17a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/11-17/s_1185011) **“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’**

1. **Merchandise of gold and silver**: This long list needs little explanation, except to note these are all luxuries, **not** necessities.
   1. It is plain that the mourning is rooted in self-interest: **for no one buys their merchandise anymore**.
2. (Walvoord) “The combined picture is one of complete abandonment to the wealth of this world and complete disregard of the God who gave it.”
3. **And bodies and souls of men**: The profits of commercial Babylon have come through cruelly using others. They sold the **bodies and souls of men**. This idea has many applications, none less so than today’s widespread human trafficking, prostitution, and pornography.
4. **You shall find them no more at all**: Those who lived for the luxuries of commercial Babylon will be tormented their eternal absence of those luxuries all the more: **you shall find them no more at all**. Ultimately, hell will be a place of unfulfilled desire.

[**Revelation 18:17b-19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/17-19/s_1185017) **Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What *is* like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’**

1. **Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth**: Again, little comment needs to be made on this, other than to notice that their sorrow at *commercial* Babylon’s fall is all about *selfishness*.

[**Revelation 18:20**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/20/s_1185020) **“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”**

1. **Rejoice over her**: Should God’s people rejoice when judgment comes?
   1. **Yes**, but we don’t rejoice in the destruction in judgment. Rather, we **rejoice** in the righteous resolution God’s judgment brings.

[**Revelation 18:21**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/21/s_1185021) **Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.**

1. **A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea**: This is similar of Jeremiah’s instructions to Seraiah to bind a stone to a text of Jeremiah and cast it into the Euphrates. *Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary* ([**Jeremiah 51:61-64**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/51/61-64/s_796061)).
   1. But it also reminds us of what Jesus said in [**Matthew 18:6**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/18/6/s_947006): *But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea*.
   2. This applies to Babylon in [**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001), because *she led others into sin*. **It is a terrible thing to sin unto yourself; it is even more terrible to lead others into sin.**
2. **The great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore**: Some day, this world system will pass away, like a great stone falls to the bottom of the sea.

[**Revelation 18:22-23**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/22-23/s_1185022) **The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your *sorcery* all the nations were deceived.**

1. **Shall not be heard… shall be found anymore… shall to be heard in you anymore… shall not shine in you anymore**: In graphic and poetic language, John describes how the industry and commerce of Babylon will come to an end.
2. **For by your sorcery all the nations were deceived**: **Sorcery** is the Greek word *pharmakia*, which means, “to prepare drugs/practice of the druggist.” The lure of commercial Babylon is like a drug addiction, fed by *deceptive* advertising.

[**Revelation 18:24**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/24/s_1185024) **And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”**

1. **The blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth**: The extent of this charge is an indication that this great city is symbolic of the world system at large. There is no one literal city that is responsible for **all who were slain on the earth**.
2. **In her was found the blood of prophets and saints**: God takes the persecution of His people as a personal offense. Those who attack His people are really attacking Him.