

With little-to-no regard for God, kingdoms and empires have risen and fallen since time began, and yet, God's Word affirms, he [*God*] removeth kings, and setteth up kings (Dan. 2:21) ... there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1) ... the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing (Is. 40:15). And ultimately, he [*God*] hath appointed a day, in the which *he will judge the world* in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained [*Jesus Christ*]. ... The judgment of Babylon was briefly described in the final verses of the previous chapter, <sup>Rev. 17:16</sup> And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. <sup>18</sup> And the woman which thou sawest is that great city [*Babylon*], which reigneth over the kings of the earth. ... This destruction of Babylon is dealt with in detail in Rev. 18:1-19:5. Further background is in Ezekiel 26-28 (the fall of Tyre), Isaiah 13-14,21 and Jeremiah 50-51 (the fall of Babylon).

In our previous study (*The Mystery of Babylon, Rev. 17*), we noted how Babylon began as a literal city (Gen. 11), and gradually came to symbolise the unity of godless nations. Its meaning now seems to revert back to presenting Babylon as a real actual city (18:10,16,18,19,21). Other features in the text would support this. While it is safe to view it as a real city, its influence will be worldwide for as Antichrist's capital, it will represent his commercially prosperous empire.

Previously, John's vantage point was from heaven (ch. 15:1). At the beginning of ch. 18 though, he is on earth, <sup>18:1</sup> And after these things I saw another angel *come down from heaven*, having great power *ἐξουσία, authority*, and the earth was lightened *ἐφωτίζω, shone* with his glory *ἰδόξα*. ... The purpose of this angel is to announce Babylon's doom and God's triumph! While this event is yet in the future, the descending angel cried *ἰκράζω, screamed* mightily *ἰσχύς, powerfully, forcefully* with a strong voice (v.2), as if it already happened. No information is given by the angel as to *how* the city was destroyed, but of the same event Isaiah prophesied, <sup>Is. 21:9</sup> And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen *ἰν pairs*. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. ... Consequently, as the angel describes to John, <sup>18:2</sup> Babylon the great ... is become the habitation of devils *ἰdemons*, and the hold of every foul spirit *ἰevill*, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird [*= isolated, deserted*]. ... 'She' is no longer the harlot riding proudly and majestically on the beast, enjoying the licentious attention of the 'kings of the earth'. Instead, they have turned on her, abused her, and left her in absolute shame and destruction. ... The prayers of the faithful and martyred saints answered, <sup>6:10</sup> How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

The cause of Babylon's judgment was how she had corrupted the earth, <sup>3</sup> For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication [*idolatry*], and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance [*δύναμις*] of her delicacies [*wantonness, luxuries*]. ... She had seduced them to follow the beast, and to enjoy the evil associations. However, when the beast and the kings no longer had any use for her, they destroyed her! Previously, they had paid her handsomely for her illicit favours, but when she had outlived her purpose, she became revolting, repugnant, and repulsive ... a filthy harlot cast aside, she was considered no longer worthy of their company.

John hears another voice from Heaven warning believers who were living in Babylon and who might be tempted to compromise their faith by doing business in such a corrupt society, <sup>4</sup> Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. <sup>5</sup> For her sins have reached [*ἀκόλουθέω, glued/joined together*] unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. ... cf. *Gen. 11:4* *And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name.* ... Leave while you can, lest you become sullied with her many sins! (cf. the exit from Sodom of Lot, his wife, and his two daughters, *Gen. 19:17* *And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*) ...

And at that, the Heavenly voice changes as the angels of retribution inflict God's judgment upon the city, <sup>6</sup> Reward her even as she rewarded you [*pay her back*], and double unto her double [*cf. Jer. 16:18; 17:18*] according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. <sup>7</sup> How much she hath glorified herself [*self-adulation*], and lived deliciously [*in luxury, self-gratification*], so much torment [*βασανισμός, tortured*] and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow [*self-sufficiency*], and shall see no sorrow [*... like her master, who said, Is. 14:13* *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High*]. <sup>8</sup> Therefore shall her plagues come in one day [*Dan. 5:30, re Belshazzar*], death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth [*condemns*] her. ... Complete destruction!

Then, *not* out of sadness for the demise of their former 'harlot', the 'kings of the earth' bewail and lament over the city for they realise they have lost the rich source of their wealth and power, - *Babylon*. She had been their path to success, as she lauded herself riding proudly upon the beast (the Antichrist). Previously, she was considered the indestructible, immortal, city. The merchants also realise how they have been deceived by the harlot's false promises, and how they thought she was able to defy God and destroy His saints (17:6). However, in 'one hour' God destroyed her, <sup>10</sup> 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.

And the merchants of the earth shall weep *Isobli* and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more (v.11). ... Insolveny, bankruptcy, *disaster!* They mourn and weep not over the demise of their previously admired harlot, but they mourned and wept over their great losses, <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> And cinnamon, and odours, 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.

They realise they were plummeting downwards to the same destiny to which the harlot had descended, <sup>14</sup> And the fruits that thy [*the harlot's*] soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty *λιπαρός, luxurious* and goodly *λαμπρός, radiant* are departed from thee, and *thou shalt find them no more at all*. ... And all this, as these formerly confident city merchants stand outside, at a distance weeping and wailing (v.15), <sup>16</sup> Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! <sup>19</sup> 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 [cf. v.10]* is she made desolate *ηλιδ waste, ruined*. ... Not only Babylon had perished, but its wealth perished also. As it were, the rich businessmen had gained the whole world, but had lost their own souls (Mt. 16:26)!

In contrast to their sorrow, the victory song was heard from Heaven, <sup>20</sup> Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy *apostles* and *prophets*, for God hath avenged [*vindicated*] you on her. ... God's rule triumphs in answer to the prayers of His saints! Satan is no match for God! His perceived rule and authority disintegrate! ... His 'incarnation' in the beast will be permitted to exercise his will, with the faithful followers of God as the primary objects of his venom. ... His capital city has been inebriated with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (17:6) ... but it is *temporary*, for the song from Heaven announces in symbolic terms the overthrow of Babylon, <sup>21</sup> And a *mighty ἰσχυρός, supremely powerfull* angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus *with violence* shall that great [*μέγας*] city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found *no more at all [οὐ μὴ]*. ... Babylon with its power and influence disappears, <sup>Jer. 51:63</sup> 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: <sup>64</sup> And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.

Babylon had been the headquarters of the world's most powerful business empires, and was renowned for its arts and its music, however, **Rev. 18:23** the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers [*flute-players*], and trumpeters, shall be heard *no more at all* in thee; and no craftsman [*τεχνίτης*], 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. ... It will be in complete darkness, <sup>23</sup> the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee ... with no celebrations or rejoicing, <sup>23</sup> the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee. ... There will be no families, no children, and no future for in that 'one hour' she will become utterly desolate (v.19) because of (i) *her pride*, the great men [*μεγιστᾶνες*] of the earth ... (ii) *her power*, for by thy sorceries [*φαρμακεία, occultic potions*] were all nations deceived [*πλανάω, caused to stray, wander*] (v.23) ... and (iii) *her persecutions*, <sup>24</sup> in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. The merchants had incurred God's wrath by martyring His people. ... What Babylon meted out to Jerusalem in 586 BC, God will mete out greater to Babylon in the future ... and whereas Jerusalem lay desolate for seventy years, Babylon will be desolate *forever*.

And what a transformation at the commencement of the next chapter as the sorrow of earth is replaced by the song in Heaven, **Rev. 19:1** And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: <sup>2</sup> For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.