

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 18

REVELATION 17:1 TOLD US THAT THIS SECTION OF REVELATION WAS ALL PART OF WHAT JOHN SEES AS A PICTURE OF THE JUDGMENT UPON BABYLON THE "GREAT". THAT CONTINUES IN CHAPTER 18.

REVELATION 18 OPENS WITH THE PHRASE "AFTER THESE THINGS I SAW..." AND WITH THAT WE WILL DISCOVER WHAT JOHN SEES NEXT IN THIS VISION OF THE JUDGMENT UPON BABYLON. THE TWO CHAPTERS ARE LINKED. REVELATION 17 GIVES A PICTURE OF BABYLON AND THE FORCES OF EVIL AS A HARLOT AND A BEAST. IN REVELATION 18 WE STEP BACK A LITTLE AND HAVE AN OVERHEAD VIEW OF THE DOWNFALL OF THIS EVIL SYSTEM AND THOSE WHO ARE MOURNING AND LAMENTING ITS DESTRUCTION. IN OTHER WORDS - BABYLON IS DYING, HOW ARE PEOPLE RESPONDING?

BABYLON REMINDER: OUR STUDY HAS LED US TO UNDERSTAND THE USAGE OF "BABYLON" IN REVELATION AS A SYSTEM WHICH HUMANITY (WITH SPIRITUALLY DEMONIC INFLUENCE AND PARTNERSHIP) HAS BUILT TO ACHIEVE POWER AND AUTHORITY WITH THE EXPLICIT EXCLUSION OF GOD. FROM THE BEGINNING, HUMANS HAVE SET UP "BABYLONS" TO MIMIC THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHOUT GOD'S INVOLVEMENT. FIRST WITH THE TOWER OF BABEL (GENESIS 11) AND THEN REPEATED THROUGH VARIOUS WORLD POWERS (BABYLONIA, PERSIA, GREECE, ROME, AND BEYOND). ANOTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE THIS WOULD BE THE "KINGDOM OF THE WORLD" (REVELATION 11:15). BABYLON/BABYLON THE GREAT IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THIS WAY AND STRUCTURE.

IN THIS CHAPTER WE ARE ALSO GOING TO DISCOVER THAT THIS SYSTEM IS MORE THAN JUST POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL. IT'S ALSO ECONOMIC AND MATERIAL. IT'S A SYSTEM THAT IS NOT JUST A WAY TO GET POWER AND AUTHORITY, IT'S A WAY TO GET EVERYTHING. IT'S THE SYSTEM THAT HUMANITY HAD CREATED TO RULE AND REIGN AND GROW AND PLAY AND EAT AND DRINK AND TRAVEL AND DRESS AND WORK. IT'S THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD AND IT IS SET UP TO PERMEATE ALL OF THE AREAS OF LIFE. MANY PEOPLE DON'T CARE ABOUT POLITICS, BUT ARE WRAPPED UP IN ECONOMIC ISSUES. MANY PEOPLE DON'T CARE ABOUT THE ECONOMY BUT ARE DRIVEN BY THEIR GREED AND DESIRE FOR POSSESSIONS. THESE THINGS CAN BE MOTIVATORS AND INFLUENCERS WHICH SHAPE THE EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS OF A PERSON OR THEY CAN BE NECESSARY PROVISIONS THAT A HUMAN PUTS IN GOD'S HANDS.

AND WITH THIS PREFACE WE BEGIN REVELATION 18.

REVELATION 18:1-3 - ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT: BABYLON HAS FALLEN.

NO LONGER THE PLACE OF GLORY AND POWER, NOW THE DWELLING PLACE OF EVIL AND OPPRESSION.

REVELATION 18:4-8 - ANOTHER VOICE FROM HEAVEN

WITH JUDGMENT ASSURED, THE SECOND VOICE FROM HEAVEN CALLS GOD'S PEOPLE TO "COME OUT OF HER (BABYLON), MY PEOPLE" (18:4). THIS IS A CALL TO THOSE READING THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN LIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT THAT IS COMING. BABYLON IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED, GET AWAY FROM HER! A FEW OF THE 7 CHURCHES FROM REVELATION 2-3 WERE ALSO WARNED TO REMOVE THEMSELVES FROM THE EVIL OF THEIR CITIES. THIS ISN'T NECESSARILY A CALL TO LEAVE A CERTAIN PLACE, BUT TO REMOVE ONESELF FROM THE VALUE-SYSTEM. (A SIMILAR CALL IS MADE MULTIPLE TIMES TO GOD'S PEOPLE IN JEREMIAH 51, WHICH WOULD BE WORTH FURTHER STUDY.) MORE ON THIS COMMAND LATER.

V. 7 - THERE IS A PROPHETIC TRADITION FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT WHICH IMAGINES CITIES/NATIONS AS PEOPLE THAT SPEAK OR ARE SPOKEN TO. BABYLON, ASSYRIA, EGYPT, AND OTHERS WOULD "SAY" THINGS AND GOD, THROUGH HIS PROPHETS, WOULD SPEAK BACK.

VERSE 7 TELLS US THAT BABYLON HAD SAID IN HER HEART "I SIT AS A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW AND WILL NEVER SEE MOURNING". THIS IS A STATEMENT OF PRIDE AND ARROGANCE. SHE IS SAYING I'M A QUEEN THAT WILL RULE FOREVER - NOTHING IS GOING TO STOP ME, NOTHING IS GOING TO END MY REIGN. THIS ARROGANCE IS EVIDENCE OF HER SIN - AND GOD'S RESPONSE IS THAT HER REIGN WILL END IN ONE DAY! THIS PHRASE IS A QUOTE FROM ISAIAH 47. IN ISAIAH 47 GOD ANNOUNCES JUDGMENT ON THE LITERAL BABYLONIAN EMPIRE WHICH HAD DEFEATED AND EXILED GOD'S PEOPLE. THOUGH GOD HAD USED BABYLON TO JUDGE HIS PEOPLE, BABYLON GOT ARROGANT AND EXALTED ITSELF - AS A RESULT, GOD BROUGHT JUDGMENT UPON BABYLON.

IN REVELATION 17 WE'RE READING OF THE JUDGMENT OF THE BABYLON-LIKE SYSTEM WHICH HAS EXALTED ITSELF OVER ALL, A PARALLEL OF THE JUDGMENT UPON THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE IN ISAIAH'S DAY.

V. 8 - THE LORD GOD WHO JUDGES IS STRONG. THIS IS WHAT JEREMIAH SAID AS THE JUDGMENT ON THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE WAS FIRST PROPHESED:

JEREMIAH 50:33-34 - THUS SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS, "THE SONS OF ISRAEL ARE OPPRESSED, AND THE SONS OF JUDAH AS WELL; AND ALL WHO TOOK THEM CAPTIVE HAVE HELD THEM FAST, THEY HAVE REFUSED TO LET THEM GO. 34 "THEIR REDEEMER IS STRONG, THE LORD OF HOSTS IS HIS NAME; HE WILL VIGOROUSLY PLEAD THEIR CASE SO THAT HE MAY BRING REST TO THE EARTH, BUT TURMOIL TO THE INHABITANTS OF BABYLON.

REVELATION 18:9-10 - KINGS OF THE EARTH WILL WEEP

THOSE WHO HAVE PLACED THEIR TRUST IN BABYLON WILL BE DEVASTATED WHEN THEY REALIZE HER POWER IS FUTILE AND AUTHORITY IS GONE. THEY FORSOOK GOD AND HIS WAYS AND JOINED WITH BABYLON - AND NOW THEY WILL MOURN BECAUSE THEY WERE FOOLED AND THEY WERE WRONG. THEY MINGLED WITH THE HARLOT HOPING THEY WOULD HAVE A FUTURE TOGETHER, AND NOW THEY ARE LEFT WITH NOTHING.

REVELATION 18:11-20 - THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH WILL WEEP

LIKE THE KINGS OF THE EARTH FROM VERSE 9-11, THE "MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH" WILL ALSO MOURN AS THEY SEE THE GLORIOUS REIGN OF THIS SYSTEM END. THOSE WHO HAD PUT THEIR HOPE IN "HER" WILL MOURN AS THEY SEE THEIR TEMPORAL HOPES VANISH. THEY HAD WINED AND DINED WITH THE BEAST AND ARE NOW LEFT WITH THE BILL, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THEY HAVE NO WAY TO PAY FOR THEIR FORTUNES ARE GONE.

THESE TWO LAMENTS PAINT A PICTURE SIMILAR TO A FUNERAL PARTY GATHERING TO MOURN THEIR FRIEND. THEY ARE DEVASTATED AND HEARTBROKEN. AND NOW FACING THEIR OWN MORTALITY.

REVELATION 18: 21-24 - ANOTHER ANGEL WITH ANOTHER MESSAGE

THIS FINAL MESSAGE OF REVELATION 18 ISN'T AN ANNOUNCEMENT, IT'S AN OBJECT LESSON. JUST LIKE THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THE RECOVERY OR RISE OF A GREAT MILLSTONE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, SO BABYLON'S TIME IS OVER. JOHN SEES THAT BABYLON IS NO LONGER A CITY TEEMING WITH LIFE AND ACTIVITY, BUT NOW A DESOLATE AND DARK PLACE. THE SHOPS ARE CLOSED. THE FUN IS OVER.

THE MUSIC HAS STOPPED. THE PARTIES ENDED. NORMAL LIFE IS NO MORE. SO CALLED "NORMAL LIFE" IN FACT A NEFARIOUS LIFE - A DECEPTION ALL ALONG - IT WAS ALL A RUSE OF BABYLON - AND THOSE WHO HAVE PLACED THEIR HOPE AND FUTURE IN HER PROMISES AND PROTECTION ARE LEFT NAKED, EMBARRASSED AND ASHAMED.

BEFORE THE CHAPTER ENDS, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO HIGHLIGHT. THE FIRST IS THAT WE SEE A FEW MOMENTS OF CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RULERS AND MERCHANTS OF BABYLON AND THE SAINTS AND FAITHFUL ONES OF GOD.

1 - **V. 20** - CALL TO REJOICE BECAUSE THE ONE THAT HAS BEEN AFFLICTING GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE AFFLICTED AND JUDGED. WHILE MOST OF THE WORLD IS MOURNING, GOD'S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO REJOICE BECAUSE THEIR SALVATION AND VINDICATION HAS COME.

2 - **V. 24** - AS THE GLORY OF BABYLON FADES, SOMETHING ELSE IS SEEN. AS THE SOUNDS OF BABYLON'S CELEBRATION AND COMMERCE FADES, SOMETHING ELSE IS HEARD. AS THE COMMOTION OF BABYLON'S ACTIVITY AND WORK HALTS, SOMETHING ELSE IS NOTICED. IT IS THE BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS AND THE SAINTS AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SLAIN THAT IS SEEN AND NOTICED.

IT IS COMPELLING TO END THIS CHAPTER AND THIS SECTION ON THE BABYLONIAN JUDGMENT WITH THIS FINAL VERSE. IF WE ENVISIONED THE EARLIER SECTION AS A FUNERAL GATHERING, THIS FINAL VERSE BRINGS TO MIND A COURTROOM OR CRIME SCENE. HERE'S WHY I SUGGEST THAT: WE'VE READ ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON AND THE CROWD THAT HAS GATHERED TO LAMENT OVER HER. WE KNOW THAT HER ARROGANCE AND HER EVIL HAVE REACHED THRESHOLDS THAT DEMAND JUSTICE. WE KNOW SHE HAS THRIVED IN GREED, EXPLOITATION, DECEPTION - CLOTHED IN OUTWARD SPARKLE AND FILLED WITH INWARD ABOMINATIONS. BUT THE "SMOKING GUN" PIECE OF EVIDENCE THAT THE PROSECUTION IS BRINGING BEFORE THE STRONG JUDGE (**V. 8**) IS THE BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS AND SAINTS (**V. 24**). GOD IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE PRIDE AND GREED AND REJECTION OF HIS WAYS, BUT HE WILL NOT OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT HIS CHILDREN HAVE BEEN KILLED BY BABYLON AND HER PEOPLE.

AND SO JUDGMENT UPON BABYLON IS DECREED AND VINDICATION FOR GOD'S SLAIN SERVANTS IS ASSURED.

DEUTERONOMY 32:43 - "REJOICE, O NATIONS, WITH HIS PEOPLE; FOR HE WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF HIS SERVANTS, AND WILL RENDER VENGEANCE ON HIS ADVERSARIES, AND WILL ATONE FOR HIS LAND AND HIS PEOPLE."

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

WHY WOULD WE EVER WANT TO PARTAKE IN THE BABYLON SYSTEM? THIS CHAPTER TEACHES US THAT BABYLON IS THE DWELLING PLACE OF DEMONS AND UNCLEAN SPIRITS! THIS CHAPTER TEACHES US THAT BABYLON IS THE FALLEN AND SENTENCED TO JUDGMENT. WE READ THAT THOSE WHO HAVE PARTNERED WITH BABYLON ARE GOING TO MOURN GREATLY WHEN THEY REALIZE THEY HAD PUT THEIR HOPES IN HER AND WASTED THEIR LIVES ON SOMETHING THAT WILL BE DESOLATED. WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT AS THE PRESSURE, TEMPTATION AND ALLURE OF THIS LIFE OFFER US A CHANCE TO JOIN THE CITIZENS OF BABYLON.

THIS REMINDS US OF OUR NEED TO STAY IN GOD'S WORD. THE BIBLE TEACHES US WHAT IS RIGHT, WHAT IS WRONG. THE BIBLE, THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S ILLUMINATION, OUTLINES WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CITIZEN OF GOD'S KINGDOM AND HOW THAT IS REMARKABLY DIFFERENT FROM THIS WORLD. TOO MANY PROFESSED FOLLOWERS OF KING JESUS LOOK LIKE THIS WORLD AND NOT LIKE THEIR KING. THIS IS NOT OKAY. WE ARE CALLED TO BE THE LIGHTS OF THE WORLD, NOT LOOK LIKE THE WORLD. WE ARE CALLED TO BE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, NOT SETTLE FOR THE SYSTEM OF THIS AGE.

THE TEXT CALLS US TO "COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE..." THIS CALL IS A GIFT AND EVIDENCE OF GOD'S GRACE. PRIOR TO THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD, GOD CALLS US TO ASSESS THE MAKEUP OF OUR LIVES AND MAKE CHANGES WHERE WE NEED TO. THIS IS A CALL OF SALVATION AND RESCUE.

"COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE" IS NOT A CALL TO IGNORE. HOW HAVE YOU ALIGNED WITH BABYLON IN YOUR THINKING, REACTIONS, FINANCIAL SPENDING, ENTERTAINMENT, RELATIONSHIPS, PLEASURE-SEEKING AND MORE? EACH OF US NEED TO "CONSIDER OUR WAYS" AS THE PROPHET HAGGAI CALLS US TO (HAGGAI 1:5, 7). DON'T ASSUME YOU'RE EXEMPT FROM THIS CALL. ASK SOMEONE FOR PRAYER, ASK SOMEONE FOR HONEST CONVERSATION - UNCOVER EVERY AREA OF YOUR HEART AND LIFE THAT MIGHT BE STAMPED "MADE IN BABYLON" AND PURGE IT FROM YOUR SOUL. GOD WILL HELP YOU IF AND WHEN YOU ASK. BUT JUST THINKING READING THESE VERSES TODAY DOESN'T BRING CHANGE - IT IS BRINGING YOUR HEART TO THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU AND ASKING FOR HELP THAT BEGINS CHANGE.

THE CALL TO COME OUT OF BABYLON ISN'T JUST A SUGGESTION. THE CONTEXT OF THE VERSE INCLUDES THE WARNING THAT IF WE DON'T LEAVE BABYLON, WE WILL BE DESTROYED TOO.

REVELATION 18:4 - COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN HER SINS AND RECEIVE OF HER PLAGUES;...

IF WE'RE IN THE "CITY" WHEN THE JUDGEMENT COMES, JUDGEMENT COMES UPON US.

BABYLON IS OFFERING YOU AND I A LOT. AND THE PRESSURE TO BUY IN IS NO JOKE. LIVING IN BABYLON BRINGS PLEASURE, SUCCESS, POWER, ANSWERS, DELIGHT, FULFILLMENT. BUT BABYLON'S OFFER IS DEADLY AND IT'S A DECEPTION. GOD'S OFFER IS BETTER AND ETERNAL. WE LIVE AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH AS WE WAIT FOR THE NEW JERUSALEM, AND WE WALK WITH GOD ALONG THIS ROAD. AS WE WALK WE DO FIND PLEASURE, FULFILLMENT, LOVE, PURPOSE AND MORE. AND THERE IS NO DEADLY POISON BAKED IN TO GOD'S WAY. HIS OFFER IS GOOD AND REAL AND ETERNAL.

TODAY WE MUST REJECT THE SYSTEM OF BABYLON AND THE WAY OF DEATH SHE OFFERS AND RENEW OUR ALLEGIANCE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE WAY OF JESUS. THE PEOPLE OF BABYLON APPEAR TO HAVE STRENGTH NOW BUT WILL END IN MOURNING AND WEeping, DESPAIR AND DEATH. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE ASSURED THAT OUR FUTURE IS AN ETERNAL LIFE WITH NO MOURNING OR WEeping OR DISPAIR OR DEATH. CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE.