

Lesson Six

(18:1-24)

THE LAMB AND THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

This chapter portrays, in symbolic terms, the devastating prostration of the city of Rome. It will be many years future to the time John is writing, but it is so certain John speaks of it as an accomplished fact! The glory of ancient Rome did disappear from the earth in exactly the manner John predicted it would.

Chapter eighteen presents a vivid picture of the contrast between heaven's attitude and the world's attitude when the judgments of God fall on wicked worldliness. Heaven and the saints rejoice; the worldly-minded mourn. To some people it may seem out of character for heaven to call for rejoicing over the devastation of Rome (18:20). But heaven knows that the life of the godly on earth is one of persecution, deprivation and injustice (Jn. 15:18-21; 16:33; II Tim. 3:12). Christians cannot always expect to have injustices vindicated in this life. They are not permitted to carry out any personal vengeance (Rom. 12:14). Christians must trust God to punish wickedness in the ultimate sense and they may rejoice at every clear judgment of wickedness in history.

It is clearly a distinguishing mark of Christian character to hate evil and love good. Christian character insists on a demand for justice and an uncompromising call for an end to evil. Righteous men will rejoice when wickedness is brought to an end, either by conversion or judgment. But

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they will let God accomplish both through the faithfulness of his word. Moses and the Israelites sang for joy at the fall of Pharaoh's army. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly exhort the believing "remnant" to rejoice at the promised destruction of their enemies. The Christian is not to love the world or anything in it. He must be ready and willing to rejoice at its destruction! Because that is how it is in heaven, forever!

Prostrate "Babylon" (18:1-24)

18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor.
²And he called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons,

a haunt of every foul spirit,

a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;

³for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion,

and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her.

and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness."

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"Come out of her my people,

lest you take part in her sins,

lest you share in her plagues;

⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven,

and God has remembered her iniquities.

⁶Render to her as she herself has rendered,

and repay her double for her deeds;

mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.

⁷As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'

⁸so shall her plagues come in a single day,

pestilence and mourning and famine,

and she shall be burned with fire;

for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and were wanted with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; ¹⁰they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

"Alas! alas! thou great city,

thou mighty city, Babylon!

In one hour has thy judgment come."

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no

one buys their cargo any more, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

¹⁴“The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee, and all thy dainties and thy splendor are lost to thee, never to be found again!”

¹⁵The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

¹⁶“Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,

bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

¹⁷In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

“What city was like the great city?” ¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she has been laid waste.

²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

“So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and shall be found no more;

²²and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters,

shall be heard in thee no more;

and a craftsman of any craft shall be found in thee no more;

and the sound of the millstone shall be heard in thee no more;

²³and the light of the lamp shall shine in thee no more;

and the voice of the bridegroom and bride shall be heard in thee no more;

for thy merchants were the great men of the earth,

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and all nations were deceived by thy sorcery.
24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth."

vv. 1-3 . . . Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great . . . — "After this" does not mean chronologically. It is a phrase used in Revelation to distinguish one vision from another, but not necessarily in time. Chapter 18 is merely a continuation or an amplification of the subject matter of chapter 15, 16 and 17—the judgment of God upon Rome. The angel now coming down from heaven is apparently not one of the seven who had the bowls. This angel is one of great power and authority and probably directly from the presence of the glory of God; the earth was made *bright* (Gr. *ephotisthe*) with his glory. He cried with a *mighty* (Gr. *ischui*, "boisterous"), *great* (Gr. *megale*, "mega-") *voice* (Gr. *phone*). What he said thundered; it roared; it was ear-splitting.

"*Fell, fell* Babylon the great," is a literal translation of the Greek aorist verb, *epesen, epesen*. Rome's fall, though not for another 350 years after John, is so *certain* it may be said, from heaven's perspective to have already taken place! Rome, and all her consorts, may not see herself as ever to fall (18:7), but from heaven's vantage point her doom is sealed.

"And she *became*," is a literal translation of the Greek aorist verb, *egeneto*. The fall will result in the once proud, rich, arrogant and splendid buildings of Rome becoming the haunts or "*cages*" (Gr. *phulake*, "prison") of demons, unclean spirits and unclean, hated birds. It is doubtful that John meant the ruins of ancient Rome would become haunts of actual demons. There is no evidence that evil spirits are living in the ruins of the ancient Coliseum. John is merely symbolizing the devastation of ancient Rome and the contempt with which history shall hold it for its arrogance, its injustices done to Christians, and its insane depravity which brought self-destruction. In a figurative way the ruins of Rome are today haunted by the ghosts (spirits) of demon-worship, uncleanness of the human spirits long gone, and every foulness ever hated by God-fearing men. No civilization or culture has ever been able to outdo Rome in depravity. Many have imitated her, but none have exceeded her. And why should Rome escape total devastation when "Babylons" which had preceded her suffered it (cf. Isa. 13:19-22; 34:11-15; Jer. 50:39; 51:37; Zeph. 2:15).

All the world (nations) known to civilized man was made by Rome to participate in her ungodliness. Rome built her empire by military conquest and economic extravagance. Practically all the cultures and races of the world willingly joined in political and military alliance with Rome, following her depraved ways, to gain powers and favors from her. Puppet kings and influential men (like the Herods) grew rich through political and business advantages granted them by Rome. By fawning to the indulgent

whims of the Caesars, even when it meant exploitation and treason against their own people, the politicians and merchants grew rich. By imposing exorbitant taxes upon their subjects, by selling many of their own peoples into slavery, and by exporting to the lascivious and insatiable Rome all their best national products, these provincial kings and traders engaged in intercourse with the "harlot" and became as guilty as she. *Wantonness* is "insolent, insatiable, luxuriating." The Greek word *strenous* is translated wantonness and means "to run riot, to indulge voraciously." Kings and merchants sacrificed truth and kindness to grow rich with Rome. International dealings today which compromise principle for mammon are as wanton as those who "fornicated" with Rome. God wants his creation to be administered by nations upholding truth and justice even if it means the loss of economic gain. Nations making efforts to trade and negotiate on the basis of fundamentally revealed truth will be supplied with power and prosperity. That is what Rome and her consorts did *not* do.

vv. 4-6 . . . Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins . . . — The voice saying this is not identified. We assume it was God's voice since it said, ". . . my people." The Greek verb *exelthete* is aorist imperative. God does not merely suggest Christians should "come out" of the world, he *commands* it. John is not ordering Christians to make a geographical exodus from the city limits of Rome. Even if they came out of the city they would still have been in "Rome." Neither does John mean that Christians of his day should withdraw from the world into monastic societies. Paul made it plain in I Cor. 5:9-13 that while Christians must associate with the ungodly because they cannot take themselves away from the world, they do not have to allow the ungodly to join in the fellowship of the saints. John is enjoining Christians to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness . . ." as Paul did in Eph. 5:11. God called the righteous from fellowship with the ungodly all through the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 12:1; 19:12-14; Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 9, 45). The saints of the New Testament are not to be partakers of other men's sins (cf. I Tim. 5:22; II Cor. 6:14-15; II Jn. 11). Christians may be in the world but they are not to be of the world (Jn. 17:11, 16; Rom. 12:1-2). The person who chooses the world is an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

Many of the Christians to whom John wrote would have to make great sacrifices to live their lives separated from Rome's idolatry and depravity. Some would have pagan family members turn against them. Others would be accused of treason against the emperor and slain. Some would be deprived of employment, food and property. But whatever the cost, the separated life would eventually lead to glory—for if God was for them, who could be against them? (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). Nothing Rome could do to them could separate them from the love of God. Those who share in Rome's sins will also share in her plagues (see Rev. 15:1—16:21) and eventually be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20-21).

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The Greek verb *ekollethesan* is from *kollao* and means literally, "glued." It is translated "heaped" or "reached." Sin after sin had been glued together until a huge mountain of wickedness had reached even up to heaven. It was a vile, black, mountain of rebellion, profligacy and depravity. God reached the limit of her mercy. The longsuffering of God mercifully gives nations and men opportunity after opportunity to make choices, but eventually those who stubbornly and deliberately amass records of continued sin must suffer the limits of God's toleration. God will not forever bear rebellion against his sovereign will. No nation or people on the face of the earth can long postpone the wrath of God if it continues to pile up sins against him (cf. II Chron. 28:9; Jer. 51:9; Ezra 9:6, etc.), and does not repent.

Men may forget some of their sins (Mt. 25:44-46) but God will not—except those covered by the blood of Christ. Men may think God forgets, but he does not (Hosea 7:2). The idea that God forgets the sins of the impenitent is one of the most subtle of the devil's deceptions. God is love, but he is also just (Rev. 2:23; 22:12). Jehovah would be no better than the idol-gods made by the hands of men if he should be incapable of remembering and dealing with impenitent sin. If he cannot or will not judge, he cannot save.

After calling his people "out" of Babylon, God calls those who will execute his wrath (angels) upon her. They are to give her what she has given. God is evenhanded in his justice. Rome is not to suffer twice as much as she handed out, but the phrase "Double unto her double according to her works" (as it would be translated literally) means that since Rome was generous and gave double portions of evil to the world, so she shall receive double portions of God's wrath. The same idea is in "mix for her what she has mixed-double." God has operated on this principle of justice always (cf. Psa. 137:8; Jer. 16:18; 17:18; 50:15, 29), and any man or nation that thinks he will not continue to do so (Gal. 6:7-8) is deceived. We think of nations and governments which have been doubly cruel to the saints of God in our own century and wonder if God remembers. God remembers! When their crimes against God and his church have reached heaven he will execute his justice, double wrath for double wickedness.

vv. 7-8 As she glorified herself and played the wanton . . . — Rome exalted herself and ran riot in luxurious indulgence of the flesh (Gr. *estreniase*, played the wanton). Just as proud and irresponsible as Rome bragged she could get by with, so she is to be *equally* humiliated and punished. The higher one flies, the farther one has to fall! The Prodigal Son flew high, wasted all his inheritance in riotous living, and wound up living with the pigs.

But Rome does not see herself as a profligate or derelict. She tells herself she is enthroned as the queen of the world. The Greek word translated

sit is kathemai, a derivative of the Greek word *kathedra*, from which we get the English word, *cathedral*, which means “a seat of authority, a throne.” Isaiah portrayed ancient Babylon saying the same thing of herself—“. . . who say in your heart, I am and there is no besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children”; (Isa. 47:7ff.). Ancient Nineveh said the same of herself (Zeph. 2:15). So did Tyre (Ezek. 28:2); and so have scores of other great world-capitals, both ancient and modern! Many emperors and nations have boasted they would last forever—Cyrus the Great’s Persia; Alexander the Great’s Greek empire; the British empire; Hitler’s Third Reich. None of these were as powerful and rich as the Roman empire of the first century, but they are all gone, including Rome! The Roman Forum which was the seat of her power is today only ruins visited by tourists. Rome’s power and grandeur is only a cadaver of the past upon which historians pronounce *post mortems*.

It is a temptation for Americans to look at their mighty nation—“the most powerful and richest nation that ever existed” some say—and think, “It may have happened to ancient empires but it could never happen to us.” Americans would do well to look at Rome—or at Berlin after World War II. It can happen anywhere, anytime, where nations and people continue in rebellion against God!

Rome says she shall *never* mourn. God says, “in one day” her plagues and destruction come. One, twenty-four day is not meant to be understood literally. It is figurative language, poetic in style, symbolizing the suddenness and unexpectedness of Rome’s fall. In 410 A.D. the entire world was stunned by the news that the once proud city of emperors had been sacked, looted and burned by the barbarian Visigoths (see comments on Rev. 9:13-19, Vol. I, pgs. 108-113). That was just the beginning of the plundering of Rome, but it was sudden and unexpected and signaled her demise. God is equal to the challenge of Rome for eternal sovereignty of the world. She boasts she will never relinquish her hold on the world. But God is mighty. Rome’s predicted fall is guaranteed on the basis of God’s power and character (faithfulness and justice). What God says will surely come to pass. Nebuchadnezzar learned that (see Daniel chs. 1-4).

vv. 9-10 And the kings of the earth . . . will weep and wail over her . . . — What a strange paradox! The kings of the earth who had turned in hate upon the harlot and joined in making her desolate, now weep and wail over her as she is being destroyed. But that is the way of worldliness. These “kings” were not weeping out of compassion for the harlot, they were mourning their own loss. When the harlot passed away, what they had enjoyed by her power was gone. There is no “rhyme or reason” for the actions of most unbelievers. The unbelieving mind does not think logically, for it is a mind in rebellion against the Source of Logic and Reason. It is a mind in anarchy—a mind gone mad. That is why Paul wrote to the

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Corinthians, "Come to your right mind and sin no more" (I Cor. 15:34). A mind that deliberately chooses falsehood over truth is an unbalanced, irrational mind. That does not relieve such a mind of culpability. Lenski says, "The lover of a whore strangles her and then weeps like a fool." But that does not mean the "lover" is not guilty.

These "allies" of Rome stand afar off as she burns. They cannot help her and are careful to stay their distance to avoid sharing in her doom. Such are "fair-weather-friends." The citizen of the country where the Prodigal Son spent all his money gave the prodigal room and board with his herd of hogs! The worldly-minded always looks out for himself above everyone else. That is why the Christian must have a transformed mind—for he must always look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4).

vv. 11-13 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her . . .—The city of Rome was like a voracious and insatiable wild animal. Roman aristocrats and the new-rich spent money in unbelievable quantities. Modern man's most extravagant luxury is poverty compared with the riotous extravagance of ancient Rome. One of Nero's "freemen" was so rich he regarded a man with a fortune of \$12 million dollars a pauper. Apicius squandered a fortune of \$2 million in refined debauchery, and then committed suicide when he had only \$250,000 left because he could not live on such pittance. In one day Caligula the emperor squandered the taxes of three provinces amounting to \$250,000, and in a single year boasted of spending \$40 million dollars. There was an insanity of wanton extravagance in first century Rome without parallel in history. (See comments on Lesson 1, Vol. I, for more information).

John's list of the goods no longer being sold in Rome is an amazingly detailed inventory of first century merchandize. It shows the indulgent luxury of Rome and how widespread Rome's commercial empire was. Gold and silver came from Egypt and Spain. Pliny the Elder writes of hydraulic mining for gold in that age which would put recent operations to shame. Roman aristocrats and emperors used gold and silver in building and crafts like we would use steel and marble today. Jewels and pearls and the various spices all suggest the Orient. Silk and cinnamon apparently came from China. Silk was usually purchased to make clothing for the rich. One pound of silk was sold for one pound of gold (worth approximately \$8000 today). Thyine wood was from a special citrus tree which grew in North Africa, prized for its coloring which was like a peacock's tail or the stripes of a tiger. The grain in the wood made it valuable for tables. One table made from this wood could cost anywhere from \$8000 to \$30,000. Ivory would be shipped from India and Africa and was very costly. It was used to make furniture and decorative pieces. Fine linen (made of flax or hemp) came mainly from Egypt and only the very rich

could afford it. Purple and scarlet cloth was dyed in Asia Minor and transported to Rome for making clothing for Roman emperors, senators, and their wives. Wine was a universal table drink in that age. Water was usually unfit to drink. Italy could not supply enough wine for her own people so Rome paid high prices to have wine from other countries shipped in. Oil, used for lamps, medicine, cooking and a number of other things, was also in short supply and therefore very expensive. Metals and lumber, mined and harvested all over the world, were voraciously consumed by Rome in her world-wide public works programs and in extravagant beautification of the city of Rome. Agricultural products and animals were imported by the ton to be consumed as food and offered daily by the hundreds as sacrifices to the gods. Horses and chariots were imported by the rich to become part of the stables of the aristocrats as well as resupply for the massive Roman military complex.

The Greek word *somaton* is translated *slaves* in verse 13, but literally means, *bodies*. The slave markets were called *somatemporos*, "body-emporiums." The Greek word translated *human souls* is *psuchas*, from which we get the English word, *psyche*. In this context *psuchas* means *life*. Slaves were sold and owned, body and soul. The slave was no more than the livestock on the farm. There were over 60 million slaves in the Roman empire. In the city of Rome alone there were 400,000 slaves, half the population of the city. It was no unusual thing for a man to own 500 slaves. One Roman left in his will 4116 slaves. Emperors often had households of at least 20,000 slaves. People from every nation and culture were sold into slavery (even Hebrews). Those who owned slaves held over them the power of life and death. Slaves might be legally killed by an owner on the slightest whim or set free. Slavery was a world-wide industry and many became rich by trading and selling human beings.

The Roman empire of John's day had an astoundingly well organized passenger, freight, and express system. For the transport of goods, there were *mansiones*, which in English means waiting-places. These *mansiones* maintained riders, drivers, conductors, doctors, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and about forty beasts and the appropriate amount of rolling stock. In this way the trade of the empire could be kept moving. Where in our world there are scores of obstacles to free trade, in that Roman world there were no such obstacles. From the Great Wall in Britain to the Sudan in Africa, and to Mesopotamia and China there was one huge trading unit. There was such an immense volume of trade and prosperity banking and credit capitalism were well advanced. Checks were used, letters of credit were common, and Roman currency was valid anywhere. The Roman empire was a paradise for businessmen. Commerce was frenzied. Only a very few ever cried warnings of the dangers of inflation and commercial crash. But the crash came. And it was one of the contributing factors to the death of the empire.

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v. 14 The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee . . . — The *merchants* (Gr. *emporoi*, those of the emporium or market) all over the Roman empire and even those in countries not under Roman rule like China, Africa and the Orient, would mourn and wail because the luxurious “fruits” of their commercial traffic with Rome was gone when she fell. The Greek word *opora* means ripe and juicy *fruit*; the word *epithumias* translated *longed* means *lusted*; the word *lipara* translated *dainties* means literally, *anointed with oil* signifying luxurious or costly; and the word *lampra* translated *splendor*, means literally, bright, shiny, *radiant*. The idea is that the sumptuous and luxurious life merchants of the empire were making for themselves by selling to Rome was all over with Rome’s fall.

vv. 15-16 The merchants . . . will stand afar off . . . weeping and mourning . . . — Like the kings, the merchants will not try to come to Rome’s rescue but will stand afar, afraid for themselves. Like the kings, they do not care for Rome—only for their own loss. The merchants do not think of Rome as “mighty” as the kings did—the merchants think of her as “wealth,” clothed in fineness and bedecked with precious jewels. Their market had collapsed! Suddenly, completely, and disastrously they lost everything. One is reminded of the stock-market crash of 1929 in America. Many businessmen were so psychologically devastated by that they committed suicide. The stock-market of the Roman empire was as sensitive to international events as is Wall Street today.

vv. 17-19 . . . And all shipmasters and seafaring men . . . stood afar off . . . — Every *helmsman* (Gr. *kubernetes*, shipmaster, helmsman), all the *ship’s company* (Gr. *plouon ho homilos*), and *sailors* (Gr. *nautai*, nautical ones), and as many as *work the sea* (Gr. *thalassan ergazontai*, make a living from the sea) mourned Rome’s fall. Throwing dust on the head was a sign of great grief in that civilization. But again, the grief is selfish. There is no pity for Rome, only pity for self. The world of sea-faring men had also become *plutocrats* (Gr. *eploutesan*, rich) through Rome’s *value* (Gr. *timiotetos*, price, cost). Homer Hailey writes: “Trade and commerce of themselves are not wicked; they are good when used for the welfare of humanity. However, when used for selfish luxury and the gratifying of fleshly lusts, they become unrighteous, profane and wicked.” To make mammon one’s god is to make oneself vulnerable to destruction when mammon’s impotence is exposed.

v. 20 Rejoice over her, O heaven . . . for God has given judgment for you against her! — The martyred saints in heaven, under the altar, had cried out for God’s justice to be done upon their murderers (Rev. 6:9-11). The Lord told them to rest a little while longer. Now heaven (including the saints and apostles and prophets) is *commanded* (Gr. *euphrainou* present imperative, “rejoice”) to be glad about Rome’s devastating death. We have already discussed the ethical aspect of believers rejoicing in the

judgment of wickedness (see introductory comments to this chapter). Those that dwelt upon the earth had rejoiced at the apparent death of the "two witnesses" (ch. 11:10), but now the witnesses rejoice at the judgment of the wicked earth. When Satan was defeated in the heavenly place and cast to the "earth," heaven was told to rejoice (Rev. 12:12ff.), because God knew (as well as the devil) that Satan's time to use the "earth" (Roman empire) was short. Now the time is up. Rome falls (prophetically). Heaven may now rejoice (prophetically). God gives judgment for his saints. God keeps his word. His judgments are faithful, just, and perfect. Believers need not fret that those who persecute them and oppose them will not receive justice—God will take care of that. Christians must have faith and leave vengeance to God. Even the Lord Jesus when reviled on earth left justice up to the Father (I Pet. 2:22-23).

vv. 21-22 So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence . . . — Throwing a millstone into the sea symbolized a punishment of severity for extreme wickedness or perversion. Jesus said anyone who caused a child to stumble should be executed this way (Mt. 18:6). Jeremiah was told to symbolize the destruction of ancient Babylon in this manner (Jer. 51:63-64). Such a punishment also pictured that the one punished was never to rise again. Rome's death will be with passion, impulsively, violently. The Greek word *hormemati* means, with haste, suddenly, violently. Her fall will not be pleasant. She will not just fade away peacefully. There will be bloodshed, misery and surprise at her end.

The Greek reads, *ou me*, (No, no) and is a double negative emphasizing total obliteration. Never again would the empire of Rome be found. This is exactly what Daniel predicted. Daniel said the fourth world empire (Rome) would be the last universal human empire. The fifth universal kingdom would be God's kingdom (the church). This double negative occurs six times in these final verses of chapter 18! Ancient Rome will never rise again. There is an interesting progression to Rome's fall in John's prophecies which parallels the historical reality; first the beast (the political structure of the empire), then Rome's allies (kings and merchants), and last the harlot (the capitol city itself).

The total death of the city is pictured in three ways. First, there never again would be seen or heard the licentious revelry and sinful gaiety which characterized the city of Rome. The wild orgies, the bloody contests in the arenas, the gluttonous feasts, the indecent and blasphemous theater productions and the pomp and extravagance of the royal processions, all attended with music and trumpets, would *not ever* be experienced in Rome again. Second, industry would cease. No more would there be found craftsmen plying their trades—no more would there be found mills grinding their produce. Rome's great commercial capitol was to die. Third, all vestiges of family and home-life was to disappear. No more lighted homes,

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no more marriages, no more Rome! Some interpreters of Daniel and Revelation (including other Old Testament prophecies) have envisioned a resurrected and restored Roman empire prior to what they call "the end of the age." Some are declaring the European Common Market is the "new Rome." During World War II a number of books on prophecy were written which announced that Benito Mussolini was about to resurrect the Roman empire as prophesied in Revelation. Adolph Hitler was supposed to be "The Antichrist" and, together with Mussolini, he would usher in the seven years of tribulation before which Jesus Christ would "rapture" the church and after which Jesus would come to earth and set up his millennial kingdom and he would rule the nations "with a rod of iron" from the city of Jerusalem. Needless to say, those books are now obsolete and out of print! Rome, a universal power of wickedness, is never to be again! When Jesus comes the next time, it is not to deal with sin (cf. Heb. 9:27-28). Sin has been dealt with once for all! God has established his *kingdom* on earth—it is the *church*. Because ancient Rome was destroyed, and Satan was bound, the church has become a universal kingdom. It is composed of citizens from all nations, races, tongues and cultures. When Christ comes the second time, for the last time, this cosmos will melt with a fervent heat and he will create a new heavens and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness only (cf. II Pet. 2:8-13).

In the last two verses of this chapter we are reminded of the three reasons God judged Rome and obliterated her. First, she made wealth and worldliness her chief ambition—"thy merchants were the great men of the earth." When materialism becomes supreme in a nation it ceases to acknowledge and practice spiritual and moral values which are the very fiber of society and of human stability. Second, Rome deceived and exploited the whole world with her "sorceries." This would symbolize all the idolatrous and blasphemous religions (including particularly deification of the emperors) Rome advocated. Idolatry and paganism have their origin and source straight from hell. They are false and in direct rebellion against the God of truth! And Rome led the whole world (except Christians) into complicity with hell. Third, Rome is accused by God of the murder of prophets and of saints. These are the millions (some estimate 2 million martyrs) slain in persecutions or dying from forced starvation because they would not worship the emperor but rather called Jesus their king. But Rome's guilt does not stop there. She is also accused of the blood of all who have been slain on earth. In her greed to conquer and luxuriate herself, she killed and destroyed and deprived until many more millions of victims were added to her crimes. It is interesting to note that the Greek verb *esphagmenon* is a perfect tense participle and would literally be translated, "having been slain and are continuing to be slain." Perhaps God intends Rome to be *symbolically* guilty of all the blood shed on earth from the beginning of

time until the end of time! Rome (figuratively called, Babylon) did unite in itself the symbolic nature of worldliness and wickedness for all generations (cf. Rev. 13:2). Rome did give the ultimate order to crucify the Son of God (cf. Rev. 11:8). Jesus pronounced the Pharisees guilty of all the blood shed from Abel to Zechariah because of their duplicity in crucifying the Messiah (Mt. 23:29-39). The universal pagan sovereignty Rome enjoyed is gone, never to be revived. But the triad of forces opposing the church of Christ which were so powerful in Rome live on with less concentration and in subdued influence in the present world—political persecution, humanistic idolatry, and materialistic indulgence. The subduing of these powers is the result of the missionary thrust of the gospel into the far reaches of civilization. Truth sets people and nations free from ignorance and falsehood and Satan's powers are bound to a greater degree than they were when Rome controlled the world.

APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

1. What contrast in perspectives on the fall of Rome does chapter 18 present? Is it all right to rejoice when wickedness on earth is destroyed?
2. Why does John say Rome had already fallen when he wrote Revelation? Do you believe the words of the Bible will come to pass so certainly that you can consider them as good as done? What about your forgiveness?
3. Do evil spirits live in the ruins of ancient Rome today? What did John mean by such a statement in 18:2? When you look at the ruins of ancient Rome today, what do you think about?
4. Why did all the nations of the world join Rome in her depraved opposition to the kingdom of God? Do nations still join one another opposing the kingdom of God for the same reasons?
5. Could Christians have remained residents of the city of Rome and still obeyed God's command, "Come out of her, my people . . ."? Could Christians in Moscow, Washington, D.C., or Tokyo obey the same command today? What about you—are you "coming out of your Rome"?
6. How many sins does a nation have to commit to heap up a pile to heaven? Will nations which have persecuted Christians in our generation ever be punished? How do you know? When?
7. God saw Rome destroyed. How did Rome see herself? How many nations have seen themselves as Rome did? Do Americans?
8. Why would those kings who had joined in destroying the harlot (17:16) wail when she was destroyed? Have you observed people or countries acting this way in your experience? What would cure such irrational behavior?

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON REVELATION

9. Where did these merchants who were mourning Rome's fall come from? Why did they weep and wail? Do you think the world which hates America today would weep and wail if she were suddenly destroyed? Why?
10. Why are slaves mentioned in connection with commerce? What does the Bible say about slavery? Why didn't Jesus demand an end to it when he was preaching? Did the Old Testament permit the Hebrews to have slaves? Do you think America would be here today had it allowed slavery to continue?
11. Could you rejoice today if certain nations which are persecuting God's saints and making trouble for the rest of the world were destroyed? What about great religious organizations which oppose Biblical belief or lead millions into falsehood? How many ways does God have to deal with such opposition to his kingdom?
12. Does the proclamation of the gospel and its belief by a majority of a nation affect that nation's behavior toward mankind? How? Why? Can you name some examples of nations, both pro and con?