

8. In the great power struggles between nations are all morally responsible for their actions, regardless of their attempts to justify any given action as politically expedient - vs. 9?
9. In vs. 10 we note sacred sarcasm against any and all who trust in their own strength (misplaced trust) - vs. 10. Discuss.
10. Discuss the relationship between morals, merchants, and money - vs. 11.
11. What would happen in our world, if the things were no longer of value - vs. 12? Would nations give their wealth to escape a nuclear holocaust? Would the money mongers exchange their wealth for their safety?
12. How can we make merchandise of the "souls of men" - vs. 13?
13. How did the merchants respond to the destruction of the great city - vs. 15?
14. How long did it take God to make desolate the great city - vs. 16?
15. How were the great merchant ships affected by the destruction of the great city - vs. 19?
16. Has God vindicated His people by His judgments - vs. 20?

The Doom of Babylon
Chapter 18:1-24

John gives us the announcement of the collapse of Babylon in this chapter.

Verse 1

John saw "another angel coming down out of heaven." The heavenly messenger proclaims the ruin of Babylon (vs. 1-8). John uses a series of quotations in this section of *The Revelation* from Jeremiah 25:15, 27, 50:8; 50:39; 51:8; Isaiah 21:9, 47:7-8; 48:20; Psalm 137:8. The fall of Babylon has effected the economy of the world. The merchants, the kings of the earth, and the seafaring people are mourning over their economic catastrophe. The imagery of the laments come directly from Ezekiel, chapters 26-27.

The angel came directly from the throne room of God because "the earth was lightened with his glory." The entire populated earth was to hear the announcement of doom.

Verse 2

The angel cried - "Fallen fallen (*epesen*) is Babylon the great, and became a dwelling place of demons, and a prison of

every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and having been hated bird," . . . The mighty city has become so corrupt that evil spirits make it their home. The luxury of Rome provided the seed of immorality!

Verse 3

The kings and nations of the earth shared the guilt of decadent Rome. ---"And the merchants of the earth became rich (the English word, waxed, of the 1901 translation comes from the German word *wachsen* - to grow or increase) from power of her luxury" (*strēnous* is a late Greek word for arrogance which stems from luxury).

Verse 4

The angel hurls down the challenge for the Christians to - "Come forth, my people, out of her, that (*hina* - purpose clause) you do not share (the Greek word is to have fellowship with) in her sins, and that you do not receive of her plagues." God's judgment is coming. May the people of God be in but not of the world when His trumpet sounds to assemble mankind in the valley of judgment. Jeremiah 51:6, 45; Isaiah 48:20, and II Cor. 6:14-18 issues the same command to come out! This is one of the greatest paradoxes of the Christian life - how to witness to a lost world, and yet not become tainted with her sins. One thing is certain, the Church cannot be a ghetto institution and carry out the great final commission of our Lord.

Verse 5

Their iniquities have reached heaven. God's universe is still a moral universe, and "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap."

Verse 6

The double recompense was a vital part of the Levitical law (see Exodus 22:4,7). The Spirit of vengeance has already been manifested in *The Revelation* 6:10—"How long O Master, the holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? "The divine justice demands that the evil city (the entire Empire) be rewarded for her iniquity. The voice that John heard said, "Give back (*apodate* - 2nd aor. imp. mood signifies a command to return double as she gave to you) to her as indeed she gave back, and double (imp. mood - command again) double unto her double according to her works; in

the cup in which she mixed - mix (again imper. mood) to her double." There will be a pay day some day! Evil shall not always prosper nor prevail. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." The verse implies that the persecuted Christians are to retaliate. Each major verb is in the imperative or command mood. In the historical situation, the Christians were in no condition to retaliate; therefore, in the plan of God Christians alone shall prevail, and mercy, justice, and righteousness shall run down the hills of the new Jerusalem as mighty waters. One of the central problems of a Christian World-view is the phenomenon of evil. How can God be both *just* and *justifier* of the alien sinner? How can God be both Holy and all-powerful and permit evil to persist? How can the Christian God permit His people to be persecuted and slain? Does this verse speak of the O.T. *lex talionis*? (See also *The Sermon on The Mount* - Matt. 5:38-48). Does this verse imply that the great harlot is to receive twice as much punishment as she deserves? The phrase *kata ta erga autēs* ("according to her works") clearly shows that the harlot receives just the amount that she deserves!

Verse 7

Swete's words are very appropriate—"Let her share of misery be proportionate to her arrogant self glorification." (Swete, *op cit.*, p. 230). The great harlot is humiliated by her loss of wealth and status. (Our age is not the only age which has been burdened by - *The Status Seekers*). Their wealth and social status is now replaced by "torment and sorrow. Because (*hoti* or causal or force - shows the ultimate cause of her torment and sorrow) in her heart she continually says, because (*hoti* - again the cause) I sit a queen, and I am not a widow, and shall by no means (*ou mē* - the double negative is an idiom for absolutely not) see sorrow." This is manifestly a belligerent, arrogant attitude. The self-image of the great harlot made her ready for the visitation of God's judgment. There is no fall like the fall which comes when one thinks he is on top! This is true of individuals or nations, or empires, or civilizations (see Arnold Toynbee's *History* for his analysis of the fall of the great world civilizations). All the great civilizations, including Rome, fell at the height of their power. Why? Their moral decadence destroyed the ethical foundations of her society. Societies have been built on *reason* (Plato's rationalistically oriented *Republic*); *law* (Roman civilization contributed concepts of Law which are still inseparably bound to the 20th century, western civilization);

religion (Jewish civilization and Roman Catholic Europe, up to the modern era of Newton, Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, *et al.*) Religion had been used for over one thousand years as a foundation of society; yet, it contributed to the collapse of Medieval Europe. The 1955 *Harvard Report on Education* claimed that Western civilization would never again utilize Christianity as the foundation for our social structure. This may be true, but no one could seriously claim that Biblical Christianity has ever been used as the foundation for human civilization. Here we have the insoluble paradox between humanly engineered society and the Kingdom of God! What place does human effort really play in the working out of God's purpose in the universe? (See W. A. Beardslee, *Human Achievement and Divine Vocation in Message of Paul: Studies in Biblical Theology*, Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 635 East Odgen Ave., Naperville, Illinois.)

Verse 8

Jesus warned those of us who fail to lay up treasures in heaven where "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." This is exactly the situation we find in this verse. The great harlot was not building for eternity, but rather, for the pleasures available only for a season. Moses understood this problem very well. A person cannot serve both God and Man. God's spirit enabled Moses to serve the living God, even at the expense of earthly possessions—"When he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26). The fall of Babylon was inevitable, because of the power and purpose of the living God. John heard the voice out of heaven say—"Therefore (*dia touto* - transitional preposition) in one day her plagues will come, death, and sorrow, and famine, and she will be burned down (utterly consumed) with fire; because (*hoti* - causal force - the cause of death, famine, and destruction by fire) the Lord God is strong (and not in text) - the one who judged her." (*krinos* - 1st aor. participle, the fact is asserted that the judgment is over.) How long can the strongest stand in the presence of the living God, when they are enthralled with evil? God's messenger stated that the mighty Roman Empire would last one day (*en mia hēmera*). The proud, arrogant harlot thought that she would be able to stand against her strongest enemy, but she forgot to con-

sider the greatest of all of her enemies - the Holy, Righteous God! She thought that no one could call her to give an account, but the all-mighty "is the one who judged her." She was unprepared for that summons!

Verse 9

This verse begins a section which extends to vs. 20. Those who repeatedly committed fornication with the great harlot lament - kings, merchants, and navigators. This is followed by the scene of rejoicing in heaven. "The kings of the earth will weep and wail over her"—when all the petty kings of the earth see that the giant harlot is fallen, they will express their loss with intensive crying, and wailing or agonized mourning. The source of their income and immoral pleasure lies in debris heaps. This will be their immediate response—"whenever they see the smoke of her burning,"—if this is the response of the men of international influence, how will the lesser persons respond? The rulers of the earth have yielded to her temptations; and have enjoyed the prestige of her wealth. What do these men deserve - when they stand in judgment?

Verse 10

The destruction is so extensive that the ruins of her can be seen by those—"standing from afar because of the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, Woe, the great city Babylon, the strong city! Because in one hour came (*elthen* - 2nd aor. ind. - it came in a single, final act) your judgment. Note the paradox between the descriptive phrases - "the strong city," and the great (*megalē* - great both with respect to power and size or extent of control of the nations of the earth) and the fact that it only took God one hour to judge her. This imagery shows the greatness of God. What men think is great and powerful will be absolutely powerless, when God comes in judgment. It took centuries to build the mighty Roman Empire and God leveled her cities, wealth, prestige "in one hour." Can America learn anything from this pronouncement by the voice out of heaven?

Verse 11

Beginning in this verse through verse 14, Rome is pictured as the great commercial city controlling the economy of the world. (Check 13:17—"And that no man should be able to buy or to sell save he that hath the mark,"---) This implies an absolute control of commerce or international trade. Does the Gospel of

Christ have anything to say to the economic systems of our day? Does redemption in Christ contribute anything to the political and economic situation of our own day? The preceding two verses mentioned the response of the rulers of the world to the fall of Babylon. Now in this verse the heavenly messenger describes "the merchants of the earth." John uses imagery taken from Ezekiel chapters 26-27, where he describes the fall of Tyre. The merchants "weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargo anymore." The merchants were not particularly grieved because of the fall of Babylon, the great harlot, but because their income was cut off.

Verses 12-13

What were the cargos of the merchants? They were the status symbols of the first century. Our contemporary status symbols, at least for middle class society, are new homes and automobiles. The cargoes which came from all over the world were things which only a very wealthy culture could afford. Note 17:4, and notice again the apparel of the great harlot. The things by which she sought power and security were all perishable. Paul warns us not to be "conformed to this world" (Romans 12:1f). The glamorous fashions of this world will not avail us anything on the day of judgment. All men will be leveled before the throne of God; wealth, social status, education, prestige will not aid their possessors in that hour of God's righteous indignation. I heard Billy Graham telling of his personal audience with the queen of the Netherlands. After a short while, Billy began talking to this head of a royal house about Jesus Christ. Suddenly, she got stiff and reared back and said—Mr. Graham, do you mean that I must repent too? He replied, yes, your majesty, you must repent too! This will be the plight of us all—none shall escape, for there is no hiding place from the wrath of the Lamb. Read the items listed in the cargo, but pay special attention to the last two items in the list—"and bodies (*sōmaton* - slaves - but men were so cheap, that they were listed as nothing but bodies - merchants of men were called Body-merchants), and the souls of men." How cheap are bodies and souls of men in view of Calvary? The moral degradation of the great city becomes most apparent when we see that that which is in the image of God can be purchased in the market place. (See also Col. 2:8f; II Peter 2:3 on the theme of "Using People"). When human life becomes a commodity everything else is lost! For further study on these two verses find out where these

cargo items came from and note how universal was Rome's control and significance. Rome was the biggest thing that man had built on the earth - but it is now fallen! How small this giant had become "in one hour."

Verse 14

What is the relationship of man's spiritual needs and things? The 20th century finds mankind locked in a bitter struggle between a materialistically oriented, atheistic communism and the so-called Christian West. The hideous truth is that we are just as materialistically oriented as the communist world ever dared to be. "And the fruit which your soul lusts (*epithumias* - basic immoral desire means to want more than anything else in the world. It is used in a good, positive sense by Paul in I Tim. 3:1, when speaking of Elders desiring their office more than anything else in the world) after-departed (or went away) from you, and all the sumptuous things and the bright things (glittering things) perished from you, and shall find no more at all (*kai ouketi ou me* - means will absolutely never be found again).

Verse 15

The merchants wail, because their priceless cargos - suddenly become worthless! The things that thrilled them had been destroyed "in one hour." Their lust for luxury has now turned into "weeping and sorrowing."

Verses 16-19

These verses recount the words and haunting memories which dashed through their minds as they watched from afar. They just cannot bring themselves to accept the fate of the filth of Rome "because in one hour (*hōra* - hour is the shortest period of time used in the Bible) such great wealth was made desolate (*ērēmothē* - 1st aor. passive voice indicative - in a single act - God made the wealth and its supposed security - desolate!) The angel next presents four groups of people—(1) Shipmasters, (2) The ship's passengers, (3) Sailors, and (4) Traders—as a group who "stood from afar." Through their stunned gaze they were muttering—"what (city - not in text) is like unto this great city!" The vastness of her influence is seen in the assertion that "By which all the ones having ships in the sea were rich from her worth (costliness);" The great harlot was the only city in the world who could afford to consume the luxurious cargos mentioned in verses 12, 13, 16.

Verse 20

God has sealed the downfall of Babylon and heaven is commanded to rejoice "Because God has judged your judgment on her." The eternal city is eternal no more!

SECTION 60

Text 18:21-24

21 And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bride-groom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee; for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

Initial Questions 18:21-24

1. What did the great millstone cast into the sea symbolize - vs. 21?
2. Is the joy and happiness gone from the city according to vs. 22?
3. Why will there be no more craftsmen - vs. 22?
4. Why will there be no more grinding of the grain - vs. 22?
5. What social, family and individual issues might be raised by the fact that there shall be no light from the lamps - vs. 23? What about the source of oil necessary for the lamps?
6. Is it possible that there were no more young left after the destruction in view of second clause of vs. 23?
7. Can a nation or a society be responsible for crimes which were engineered and executed by their leaders - vs. 24?

Verse 21

John next saw that "one strong angel lifted a stone like a great millstone, and threw (*it* - not in text) into the sea, saying, thus with a violent impulse Babylon the great city shall be

thrown down, and by no means shall be found any longer." The imagery speaks of the final destruction of the eternal city.

Verse 22

The places of entertainment are destroyed. This entertainment might have occurred in the great religious Temples which were the sanctuaries of the immoral mystery religions. The musical instruments which were used in the services of the pagan religions are no longer heard in the great city. There are no crafts-men whatsoever. If there is no market for a given product, then men will not learn the craft. International economy has collapsed, therefore it would be utter folly to continue to make products which will not be purchased. There is no grain produced and no one to buy (or who could buy it); therefore, "the sound of a mill shall be no means be heard in you any longer."

Verse 23

The great city is in ruin! Her places of entertainment, Temples, homes, and public buildings have gone up in smoke. Men no longer go out in the night to hide in the flickering shadows of half-lighted buildings in order to committ their immoral acts. No one can be found who is still arrogant because of the luxury of the great harlot. Darkness has captured the city which spawned malignant darkness. The "light of a lamp by no means shall shine in you any longer."-----The young men and women have left, or were killed in the great judgment, because "the voice of the bridegroom and bride shall by no means be heard in you any longer; because your merchants were (*ēsan* - imperfect tense—their merchants used to be the great ones of the earth, but this is no longer true) the great ones of the earth, because by your sorcery all the nations were deceived." Most men are easily deceived, particularly when they labor under the delusion that wealth, luxury, and physical force are adequate to provide for security. Some men have no committment about anything; they just want to be on the winning side. Contemporary man has observed the rise and fall of some very powerful men. Whenever power is not tempered by Christian morality, it will inevitably destroy its possessor.

Verse 24

In the great city, which was bred and nurtured by evil, the great heavenly voice charges her with another barbarian activity

—butchery. (See Dill, *Roman Society*, p. 242 - now in paperback - excellent, standard work!) It was a common thing for the socially elite of Rome to butcher Christians in order to celebrate a Roman holiday.

Discussion Questions
Chapter 18:1-24

1. What was the angel's message in vs. 4?
2. Discuss the Holiness and Righteousness of God in view of the persistent problems of evil - vs. 6.
3. Does vs. 6 imply that God demands more punishment than is deserved?
4. What was the attitude of the great harlot in vs. 7?
5. Discuss the relationship of God's purpose and human achievement - vs. 7.
6. How long does it take God to bring destruction upon the great harlot - vs. 8?
7. What groups of people are mentioned in vs. 9?
8. What were the cargoes of the ships? Discuss the items as "status symbols" - vss. 12-13.
9. What does vs. 13 tell us about the value of a man in first century Roman culture?
10. What does the goals of a person tell us about that person - vs. 14?
11. What has happened to turn the priceless cargoes into worthless trash - vs. 15?
12. What are some of the implications of the relationship of luxury and spirituality - vs. 19?
13. What has happened to the lights, the craftsmen, brides and grooms, the mills, the places of entertainment in the great city - vss. 22ff?
14. What barbarian activity is implied in vs. 24?

SECTION 61

Text 19:1-8

After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: 2 for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, her that

corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3 And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying Amen; Hallelujah. 5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. 7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Initial Questions 19:1-8

1. What does Hallelujah mean in vs. 1?
2. Discuss how the truth, justice, and righteousness are related in God's judgment of the great harlot - vs. 2.
3. Discuss the spiritual implications of the imagery of "the harlot" in vs. 2.
4. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of fearing God - vs. 5?
5. What is the significance of the assertion in vs. 6 - that "the almighty reigneth"? (Reigneth is the translation of a form which means - keeps on reigning or continually reigns.)
6. Is God really reigning in the above sense in view of the rapid development of the forces of evil in our own day?
7. Who is the wife of the Lamb in vs. 7?
8. Discuss the difference in the dress of the great harlot (17:4) and the wife of the Lamb - vs. 8.

Triumph in Heaven; Two Hallelujah Psalms; An Angelic Message Chapter 19:1-10

A great shout of joy is heard in heaven because of the overthrow of the great Harlot. These shouts of jubilation also introduce the great scenes of final victory. The heavenly songs are modeled after their O.T. counterparts.

We have passed through the great woes and have seen the ravishing effects of evil upon both the spiritual and physical