

## Session 22 Great Babylon is Fallen - Hallelujah! Revelation 18:11-19:7a

- **Three laments**, v9-19

Three interested parties observe the judgement with dismay and sorrow/grief. It is not a godly sorrow that works repentance, 2Cor. 7:9-11, but sorrow at what they had lost, Heb. 13:16-17 (Esau).

- **They stand afar off** - but the fire is a harbinger of their own fate, 21:8.
- **They weep** - but not for their sins.
- **They proclaim "Woe, woe for that great city"** - c.f. 8:13, 9:12, 11:14. They have lost everything they lived for, Matt. 6:24-33
- **The suddenness "For in one hour"** - who would have thought such a thing
- **They fear** - but not a godly fear

- **The kings (rulers) of the earth**, v9-10

They were the **principal beneficiaries** of the system - the top of the socio-economic tree. There was no restraint on their behaviour (committed fornication) - immoral and idolatrous or avarice and self indulgence (lived luxuriously).

They took what they, wanted by virtue of their power, at the expense of the poor and needy. It was they who dispensed "justice". With the fall of Rome went their own power and position.

They had assumed that the mighty city would last forever, but that is the prerogative of the throne of God, Rev. 4:2-3, 9-10, 18:8b, Dan. 4:17-19.

They recognize the fall of Babylon is a judgement but this does not issue in repentance, v10.

In Ezek. 27 **Tyre** represents the commercial/trading aspect of Great Babylon. The kings in Rev. 18 are prefigured in the kings who shuddered with horror and fear at the destruction of Tyre, Ezek. 27:35.

**There are many recent and current examples of this, in a similar position as the client kings of Rome.**

- **The merchants of the earth**, v11-17a

They were the **middle men** conducting finance and trade on behalf of the kings and growing rich in the process.

Rome's merchants traded as far as India and China. There is a long list of the commodities in which they traded - extracted from the "colonies" under the protection of the Roman legions. Many were exotic items such as valuable wood, precious stones and metals, food and livestock. They also included slaves, v13. It involved **great injustice as well as ostentatious self indulgence**.

They also are **pre-figured in the merchants of Tyre**, Ezek. 27:12-26, 33-36.

Tyre acted as the trading centre and gathered the merchandise of the ancient world, and enriched the kings of the earth, v33, but was broken in the midst of the sea, v34.

- The fruit your soul longed for, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you and you will find them no more at all, v14
- The merchants became rich by her (Babylon), v15
- Woe, woe ... Weeping and wailing; "In one hour such riches came to nothing", Rev. 18:15-17a, James 5:2-5.

- **The ship captains, sailors and fishermen**, v17b-19

**They served the merchants and, in the process became rich. They admired Babylon for her power and success.**

**"Who is like the Great City?"** c.f. 13:4, Ezek. 27:32b. It is the focus of their activity and the source of their wealth - where their treasure is.

They sprinkle their heads with dust - a sign of mourning, Ezek. 27:30, c.f. Job 2:2:12.

- **Heaven, the saints, apostles, and prophets are commanded to rejoice**, v20, c.f. 12:12. **God is avenging and vindicating His people**, c.f. 12:12. Justice is being celebrated. **God has judged her for the way she judged you**, 6:9, 7:14, 11:7, 13:7, 15, 14:13, 17:6, 18:24, 19:2, c.f. Deut. 32:43, Is. 49:13, Ps. 96:11-13, Jer. 51:47-50.
- **Babylon is destroyed**, v21-24, **fulfilling the prophetic act of Jer. 51:63-64**. **This is a great millstone**, Mark 9:42 - a "donkey stone" - **thrown with sudden violence, and sinking without trace. Note the repeated phrases "Shall not be found anymore... shall not be heard anymore"**

**All activity ceases and all is silent - c.f. the merchants' laments - music**, Is. 24:8, Ezek. 26:13, (the entertainment of the rich classes), **crafts** (all the artefacts/ornaments etc. of the rich as well as the trade guilds that excluded the saints - the economy), **food** (a chief sensual pleasure of the well off), **lamps** (small domestic ones symbolizing home life), **the voice of the bridegroom and bride** (symbolizing joy, sexual pleasure/intimate relationship, S of S 2:10, 14). This contrasts with 19:7-8, 21:2, 9 (The wedding of the Lamb and the Bride).

**The chapter ends with a further statement of the reasons for the judgement**, v23b-24:

- **Economic exploitation, self aggrandisement, and the idolatry of wealth (merchants)**
- **Demonic deception of the nations - idolatry/immorality**, c.f. 2:20, 12:9, 13:14, 19:20, 20:3, 8, 10.
- **Murder of the prophets and saints**, 16:6, **and all who were slain on the earth**, c.f. 11:18, Jer. 51:49.

**All Heaven rejoices and worships** 19:1-7a

**Babylon has fallen; her judgement is complete and final.**

- **John now hears Heaven's response**, v1-10
- **Then sees the victory of the Lamb over the two beasts and their followers**, v11-21.

It is important to understand the connection between chapters 18 and 19.

The rejoicing in v1-10 is the proper response to the events in chapter 18, including the command to rejoice, even as the judgements have been taking place, 18:20. Rejoicing over the bride is increased by the contrast to the harlot, now judged and destroyed, 19:7-9

It is now fitting that the two beast and their followers who blasphemed God and made war on the saints, 12:17, 13:4-7, 15, 18:24, should be overcome and destroyed by the Lamb Who "in righteousness judges and makes war", 19:11, 19-21.

Babylon, the whole system of godless, man-centred, civilization has been brought down by God's decree, first using the agents of the beast in a form of self-destruct, 17:16-17, and then by the direct action of a mighty angel, 18:21-24.

Now the dragon's agents and their followers will meet their just deserts from the mighty conquering Lamb Himself.

**What John heard**, v1-10.

**A fourfold "Alleluia" (Hallelujah)** - The only place in the NT where this word occurs.

It is an expression of intense joy and worship, often in the context of God as Creator and Deliverer, c.f. Psalms 112, 113, 115-117, 146-150. It is particularly appropriate now that God has finally judged evil and has thereby delivered His people and His creation.

**"Alleluia" moves from an outer circle towards the throne itself, (the reverse direction to chapters 4-5) and then reverberates from the throne to the all inclusive multitude in a magnificent chorus of praise and worship and joy .**

**1) The first Alleluia, v1-2. The loud voice of a great multitude, v1-3, c.f. 5:11-13, 7:9-10.**

**"The salvation, the glory and the power belong to /are the possession of (the Lord) our God".  
Salvation/deliverance/victory is all His doing, as a consequence of His almighty power, and to His undivided glory, 7:10-12, 12:10, c.f. Ex. 9:16, Rom. 9:17, 1Chron. 29:10-13, Rom.1:18-25, 11:33-35.**

**Why celebrate? "Because His judgements are true and righteous", c.f. 15:3, 16:7; the justice, faithfulness, and righteousness of God's acts in judgement is a strong theme running through Revelation.**

**A foundation is laid in Deut. 32:3-4 (see the whole chapter); He chastises His people, v19-25, but then saves them, v36-39, and takes vengeance on the enemies of His servants, v31-35, 40-43. Note Romans 15:8-10 where Paul sees Deut. 32:43 as a prophecy of the inclusion of the Gentile believers in all of this, linking with the suffering and martyr church of Revelation.**

Psalm 79 is a graphic description of the cry for vengeance, see esp. v10; see also Psalm 94.

**This is demonstrated in two ways:**

- **He has judged the great harlot who has corrupted the earth with her fornication, 14:8, 17:1-5, 18:3, 9.**
- **He has avenged the blood of His servants the she has shed, 6:9-11, 8:3-5, 17:6.**

**2) The second Alleluia, v3. The same voices.**

**"The smoke of her torment will ascend forever and ever". The OT background is Isaiah 34, describing the judgement of God against the nations, v1-3 in the context of the final judgement, v4, c.f. Rev. 6:12-17, Heb. 1:10-12, using the local and historical judgement of Edom as a pattern, v5-17; v8-10 are closely related to Rev. 19:3, as v11-15 are to Rev. 18:2. The picture is one of total and permanent destruction, c.f. the statement in 18:21.**

**"The smoke of her burning" was a visible part of the process of her destruction, 18:9, 18. Now it is a permanent sign, a prelude to the "lake of fire" that is a way of picturing eternal punishment for the two beasts, 19:20, the devil, 20:10, and those who have chosen to follow him, 21:8.**

**Do we have difficulty in joining in this Hallelujah chorus? "His work is perfect and all His ways are just", Deut. 32:4.**

Abraham had the same question as he wrestled with the prospect of the judgement on Sodom, Gen. 18:22-33 - "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?", v25. Next morning Abraham saw "The smoke of the land that went up like the smoke of a furnace", 19:27-28, but God delivered Lot, c.f. 2Peter 2:6-10, 3:7-13.

**3) The third Alleluia, v4. The twenty four Elders and the four Living Creatures.**

**"They fell down and worshipped God who sits on the throne" - total submission and adoration and worship, Rev. 4:8-11, 5:8, 7:11-12, 11:16-18.**

**God is the sovereign Creator, worthy of the total worship of all orders of creation, , c.f. 1Tim.1:17, 6:15b-16, Jude 24-25.**

**"Amen - Alleluia", c.f. Psalm 106:48 . Amen is used in a number of places - Rev. 1:6-7, 5:14, 7:12, 22:20, 21- uniting in unity of heart with God and all His purposes for His world and His creation.**

**4) The fourth Alleluia, v5-7. The voice of a great multitude. The sound of praise and worship reaches a crescendo - like the sound of many waters, and mighty thunderings, 1:15, 14:2-3.**

**This is in response to a voice of command from the throne, v5. The speaker is not identified but it is clearly a statement with God's full authority, "Praise our God all you His servants (slaves), you who fear Him, both small and great", 11:17-18.**

**The Amen of the Elders and Living Creatures is fully authenticated by the One who is being worshipped - it is truly fitting and appropriate.**

**People may be small and great in relationship to one another, c.f. 20:12, but in His presence all that fades into insignificance, Psalm 115:13.**

The great angel whom John was tempted to worship is but a fellow slave, v10, c.f. Luke 12:42-43, 17:10.

**It is a high honour to be the Lord's servant, Num. 12:4-8, Deut. 34:5, Josh. 1:2, Isaiah 42:1-4, 52:13-15.**

**"Those who fear Him".** This is a classic biblical description of a person living in proper relationship with God and behaving in a way that corresponds to that relationship, Prov. 1:7, 3:7, Psalm 128:1, Eccl. 12:13-14, Isaiah 11:1-3.

**This great Hallelujah is a response to the great and overarching truth. "For the LORD God Almighty has begun to reign." This is His supreme Name, 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 14, 19:15, 21:22**

**Of course His reign was never in doubt, 1:8, 4:11 etc., and even the power of the dragon and the beasts was ultimately given by God, 12:5-7, but it is now demonstrated beyond dispute, 11:15-18, 1Cor. 15:24-28, c.f. Dan. 4:13-17, 24-26, 34-35.**