

Lesson 22
Revelation 18
The Final Destruction of Babylon

Memory verse: “You rebuke and discipline men for their sin; you consume their wealth like a moth – each man is but a breath” (Psalm.39:11 NIV)

We're all curious about the current state of the world economically. We're all anxious to hear about the condition of world trade, global commerce, dollar values against foreign currency. We want to know our financial future. So we're interested to hear about the share market, interest rates, budget, deficits, all of that kind of thing fills the newspapers and the magazines and the radio and the television.

More so than ever in the history of the world people are aware of economics. And more so than ever in the history of the world we live in a world where we are all tied together very closely in what amounts to a single economy, and ever-increasingly that is so. No more are economies of the world isolated, national economies. But rather we are all inter-linked because of a shrinking globe, a global village and foreign trade, we are all tied together. We have a global economy.

And that's very fitting because that is precisely what Revelation chapter 18 describes as a component of the final form of man's day before the return of Jesus Christ. What of the future? Well for one thing there will be a global economy, under the control of the final Antichrist. What will that world economy be like? Without question it will not be communistic, it will be capitalistic. It will be a luxurious, materialistic, capitalist world when Jesus comes in judgment. In fact, the world will be pursuing capitalism with a vengeance. Communism came and went, the bad social experiment and an even worse economic experiment. It will not apparently be a factor of significance in the last days economy, capitalism will reign and luxury will be the pursuit of all. This is precisely the picture of the world of the final Antichrist. The individual who as the emissary of Satan rules the globe in the years before Jesus returns to establish His kingdom which will be a true kingdom of prosperity.

The first time Jesus came He was crowned with mockery. The next time He comes He will be crowned with majesty. The first time He came He reigned from a tree, the next time He comes He will reign from a throne. The first time He came He ruled with a reed, the second time He comes He will rule with a rod. We are to make no mistake about it as this world is destined to climax in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ bodily and in great power and in great glory.

Chapter 19 of the book of Revelation describes that return. Chapters 20 to 22 describe what happens after that return and chapters 6 to 18, what happens before that return. So we are in the last chapter of the section prior to the return of Jesus Christ described in chapter 19. It's a crucial chapter because it gives us the world conditions at the time of the final judgment of sinners, when Jesus comes to set up His kingdom. It is the most complete picture of the world at the end of man's day, the system of worldwide government and commerce controlled by the Antichrist who is called the beast in the book of Revelation.

Now it is described in Revelation 18 in the context of a judgment. In some ways you could call chapter 18 a requiem, a funeral dirge. It is a very sombre chapter. In the last days before the Lord returns there is reason to be sombre. Satan will be in control of the universe, at least the world of men. But the universe which he has once controlled is starting to collapse around him and his demons who have been occupying the heavens are now cast to the earth. Satan then on the earth with all of his millions of demons is working through two key persons, namely Antichrist and the False Prophet to gain control of the world. It's his last bastion of defence. Catapulted out of heaven, as Revelation 12 described, sent to the earth, he then occupies himself with the final stand against God and against his Christ on the earth.

Things to learn: 1) Greed and self-indulgence 2) Denunciations of Babylon 3) Entrapments of a sinful world

Discussion questions:

1) Do you think the Babylon in this chapter is different from that in chapter 17?

Q2. What are the pronouncements against Babylon found in chapter 18?

Q3 How can Christians of all ages apply the warnings in this chapter even before Christ's return?