

Revelation 18

Judgment of Economic Babylon

- Where Revelation chapter 17 outlines how the evil world leadership of the end times rises to power and is ultimately judged, Revelation 18 describes the world system of the end times that these evil leaders create and preside over and how the end times world system will ultimately be judged and destroyed.
 - For this reason the subject of Revelation 17 and 18 are both described as ***Babylon the great***. The evil leaders (Rev. 17) and the evil world system they create and preside over (Rev. 18).
- Revelation 18 views ***Babylon*** politically and economically, rather than religiously. The term ***Babylon*** in Scripture is more than a reference to a false religious system, which came from ancient ***Babylon*** of Genesis 10:9-10. According to Genesis 11:1-9, out of ancient ***Babylon*** came a political power represented in Nebuchadnezzar as the first **world empire** which would include a commercial system.
- The events in Revelation 18 come late in the Great Tribulation, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ and is parallel in the timeline to the events of Revelation 16:19-21 (the 7th bowl judgment). The ***woman*** of Revelation 17 seems to precede the Great Tribulation and is present during the ***birth pangs*** and paves the way for the worship of the ***beast*** (Revelation 13:8) in the second half of the Tribulation.
 - The destruction of the ***woman*** in Revelation 17, who represents the apostate church, brings no apparent mourning. She is replaced by antichrist as the sole focus of worship and inaugurates a one-world religion with antichrist as the head. Recall that her destruction is at the midpoint of the Tribulation, with the ***beast*** and the ***ten kings*** responsible (Revelation 17:16).
 - Economic ***Babylon*** of Revelation 18 **thrives** under the kingdom of the ***beast*** and its destruction brings about great mourning (cf. Revelation 18:11, 19).
- The events of Revelation 18 are divided into **3 parts**:
 1. The angelic pronouncement of judgment (v. 1-3)
 2. The voice from heaven describing Babylon's downfall (v. 4-20)
 3. The second angelic pronouncement of judgment on Babylon (v. 21-24)

Part 1—First angelic pronouncement of judgment

Revelation 18:1-3— 1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the

nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

- John begins Revelation 18 with the phrase, ***after these things***, which refers back to the events of Revelation 17. Having just describe **religious Babylon** and her destruction in Revelation 17, John now begins his description of the events surrounding **political and economic Babylon** and her destruction.
- And, as he has in the past, John begins his description of the new scene with the phrase, ***I saw another angel coming down from heaven***.
 - The **angel** John sees ***coming down from heaven*** is different from the one who served as his guide in Revelation 17 (cf. Revelation 17:1, 7, 15). This angel resembles the **angels** who descended from heaven to fulfill special missions. For example, the angel of Revelation 10:1 is sent to recommission John and the angel in Revelation 20:1 is sent with the key to the abyss for the binding of Satan.
- The fact that John describes this angel as ***having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory*** has caused some to speculate that this is actually the Lord Jesus. But, once again, this is unlikely since the next time the Lord Jesus comes down out of heaven will be at His Second Coming.
 - The fact that this angel has both ***great authority*** and ***illumines the earth with his glory*** indicates that this angel is **bestowed** his ***great authority*** and ***glory*** by God for the purpose of carrying forth His message.
 - The phrase, ***and the earth was illumined with his glory*** emphasizes the contrast between both the physical and spiritual the darkness of the world at that time (remember, many of the trumpet and bowl judgments cause the sky and stars to become darkened), compared to the ***glory*** of God's holiness.
- Then in Revelation 18:2-3 we learn the **angel's** message . . . ***2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."***
 - The description of the **angel cried out with a might voice** means that the strength and reach of his voice is heard throughout the earth and will be impossible to ignore.
 - The main message of the **angel** is simple . . . ***fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!*** This message is also seen in Revelation 14:8 and is first seen in Scripture in Isaiah 21:9 . . .

Isaiah 21:9— "Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs." And one answered and said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."

Revelation 14:8— And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.*"

- Once again we see John's use of the **proleptic aorist tense** in the verb **fallen**. Though the downfall of **Babylon** had not yet occurred, the certainty of its fall is so certain that it is stated as having already been accomplished.
- Although the ancient kingdom of Babylon was defeated and destroyed in 539 B.C., the revived Babylonian world systems of the end times are in view here. It is the defeat and destruction of the end times Babylon that is prophesied in Jeremiah 51:6-10 and Isaiah 47.

Jeremiah 51:6-10—*6 Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, for this is the LORD's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her. 7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad. 8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail over her! Bring balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. 9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed; forsake her and let us each go to his own country, for her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies. 10 The LORD has brought about our vindication; come and let us recount in Zion the work of the LORD our God!*

- From the context of Jeremiah 51 and Isaiah 47 we can see that while ancient Babylon was a great kingdom, its reach was not to all the nations of the earth. And currently the modern Babylon (Iraq) is a minor country. But in the end time the revived Babylonian kingdom and world religious, political and economic system will become the dominant world power, which God is here declaring His judgment upon.
- The description of future Babylon's world-dominating and world-perverting works are then stated in Revelation 18:2-3 . . . ***And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.***
 - The angel's statement in v. 2 is interesting . . . ***she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.*** The word **prison** (Greek: *phulakē*) means "a cage, prison or a place where captives are kept."

Question: Why are **unclean spirits** and **every unclean and hateful birds** imprisoned in Babylon?

- It is apparent that while **Babylon** will be **a dwelling place of demons**, as the headquarters of the evil world system, there are **unclean spirits** (demons) and **every unclean [beast] and hateful bird** that will be imprisoned in **Babylon** that will be unleashed on **Babylon** as part of her judgment and destruction.
- The reference to **unclean beasts and birds** is a reference to those animals that are deemed **unclean**, according to the Law. They are scavengers and eat carrion. The **unclean spirits and birds** are mentioned to give the picture of caged creatures that are circling above Babylon, waiting to prey upon any and all that fall. What was once a thriving city and region will be reduced

to death and destruction, preyed upon by wild, unclean animals. We see similar images in Jeremiah 50:39, Isaiah 34:11 and Zephaniah 2:13-14.

Jeremiah 50:39— *"Therefore the desert creatures will live there along with the **jackals**; The **ostriches** also will live in it, and it will never again be inhabited or dwelt in from generation to generation.*

Isaiah 34:11— *But **pelican** and **hedgehog** shall possess it, and **owl and raven** shall dwell in it; and He shall stretch over it the line of desolation and the plumb line of emptiness.*

Zephaniah 2:13-14— *¹³ And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation, parched like the wilderness. ¹⁴ And flocks will lie down in her midst, all beasts which range in herds; both the **pelican** and the **hedgehog** will lodge in the tops of her pillars; **birds** will sing in the window, desolation will be on the threshold; for He has laid bare the cedar work.*

- Remember, the 200 million-strong demonic armies (sixth trumpet judgment in Revelation 9:16) were being held in the region of Babylon when they were released to kill a third of mankind. The region of Babylon, the place where sin entered into the world and where so many acts of disobedience to God were performed, is apparently a place of confinement for demonic forces.

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- Then, in v. 3 the angel reveals that reason this judgment is warranted and necessary . . . ³ **For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.**
 - Notice that **three groups** of people are in view in v. 3, **the nations, the kings of the earth, and the merchants of the earth**. These three groups incorporate the totality of mankind.
 - Also notice the sin that each member of the group is guilty of . . .

First, all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality. The word **passion** (Greek: *thumos*) is more properly translated **wrath**. In translating the phrase to read, **the wine of the wrath of her immorality** the meaning of the text changes to mean **the** **perpetration of moral evils that results in God's wrath being poured out on her for her immorality.**

- This same phrase was previous seen to describe Babylon in Revelation 14:8 . . .

Revelation 14:8— *And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made **all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.**"*

- The word **wine** (Greek: *oinos*) is used metaphorically to mean "the perpetration of moral evils." The phrase, **all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality**, is another way of saying that **when the nations follow after the immorality of Babylon, they too will drink from the cup of God's wrath.** When all the nations agree

and choose to follow Babylon, they accept that they will drink from the cup of **Babylon's wine**, as we see in Jeremiah 51:6-7 . . .

Jeremiah 51:6-7— *6 Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, for this is the LORD's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her. 7 **Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad.***

- **Second, the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her.** Here in this usage the term **immorality** (Greek: *pornea*) does not refer to sexual immorality, but **idolatry and disobedience to God**.
 - By choosing to follow after Satan and the antichrist and apostate church, the **kings of the earth** are guilty of leading people astray, into idolatry and disobedience.
- **Third, the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.** Again, the term **sensuality** (Greek: *strēnos*) does not refer to sexual sin. Instead, it refers to pride that comes with the attaining of wealth and the resulting leisure and luxury.
 - In following after the evil world system, the **merchants of the earth** compromise for the sake of avoiding conflict and enjoying physical luxury. By not “bucking the system,” **the merchants of the world** enjoy the rewards of the world in wealth and luxury. This is reminiscent of Revelation 3:17 . . .

Revelation 3:17— *'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked*

- John Walvoord writes of this destruction of Babylon . . . “this abandonment of destroyed Babylon to demons is a divine judgment stemming from the utter wickedness of the inhabitants to be described in v. 3. Babylon, in her political character, has had evil relationships with “all nations” described as “fornication.” Remember, worship of the beast is tied to economic prosperity (Rev. 13:17) and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. The resulting evil association with the beast has made the merchants of the earth rich. The wealth originally collected through the influence of the apostate church (in the first half of the Tribulation) is taken over by the political system in the Great Tribulation with which universal political power is able to exploit to the fullest its accumulation of wealth.”

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- Then, having made his proclamation to all the earth, in **Revelation 18:4-20 John records God's prediction and description of the events surrounding Babylon's fall**. This section is broken into 3 parts:

1. A call for God's people to come out from Babylon (v. 4-8)

2. Lamenting of the kings of the earth, the merchant of the earth and those who make their living by the sea (v. 5-19)

3. Heavenly rejoicing (v. 20)

Part 1— A call for God's people to come out from Babylon (v. 4-8)

Revelation 18:4-5— *4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*

- Revelation 18:4 begins with **an aorist imperative**, which is a **command used to convey a sense of urgency**. In this case, with the end of the Tribulation and return of Christ imminent, this is literally a final appeal to *come out of her, my people!*
- While the first person pronoun, **my**, would seem to make this a command in the Lord's voice, it is not. The fact that God is referred to in the **third person** in the next verse . . . **God has remembered her iniquities** . . . indicates that the reference to **my people** in v. 4 is of an angelic messenger speaking on God's behalf.
 - In Revelation 18:4 the command to *come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive her plagues* is a call for the elect of God to leave the city of Babylon as well as Babylon's worldly system of idolatry. This command to **come out** is very similar to Paul's command to the Corinthian believers in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 . . .

2 Corinthians 6:14-18— *14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 17 Therefore, **come out from their midst and be separate,**" says the Lord. "and do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. 18 And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.*

- It is likely that Revelation 18:4 is both a call to the redeemed to flee the Babylonian world system, but also an effectual call for the elect who are not yet saved to **come out** of the darkness of the world system and receive salvation.
- Then, following the command to **come out**, v. 4 closes **the purpose for this command** . . . *that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues.*
 - **In other words**, *come out of this present evil worldly system to that you will not be enticed into sin and thereby receive the punishment that God is about to inflict upon Babylon.*
 - The statement, *that you may not receive of her plagues*, is a warning that the person who remains in Babylon will be judged along with all the others who are judged in Babylon. This is a reminder that just as Lot was reluctant to leave Sodom, so those who remain in Babylon are in danger of suffering God's wrath.

- Robert Thomas says that “this is a call to separate from the evil system and receive protection from the remains plagues of God’s wrath.”
- To the warning of v. 4, John then records the reason for God’s plagues about to come upon Babylon in v. 5 . . . ***for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.***
 - The term ***piled up*** (Greek: *akolouthēō*) literally means “to join together or attached to.” The picture is that those who remain in Babylon become some settled in their sin, they become affixed to one another and they grow *en masse* in their sin.
 - The description of their ***sins*** being ***piled up as high as heaven*** is a picture of the Tower of Babel, in which Nimrod and his followers tried to build a tower to reach up to heaven. In this instance, the disobedient idolators in end times Babylon are the bricks that are being used to build the tower of disobedience that reaches to heaven.
- And just as God remembered the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah when He judged them, God will also ***remember*** the ***iniquities*** of modern Babylon when He visits judgment and destruction upon them.
 - What a contrast this is. For those who come out of Babylon, they will be forgiven. But for those who remain, they will receive God’s just punishment. Here is God’s promise, flee immorality and live. Remain and die.

Isaiah 43:25— “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

Jeremiah 31:33-34— ³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

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- In Revelation 18:6-8 we have an interesting section regarding the angel’s call to those who are being called upon to execute God’s justice on Babylon. ***In other words, this is the angel’s instruction to the executioners.***

Revelation 18:6-8— ⁶ Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. ⁷ To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’ ⁸ For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

- In Revelation 18:6 we have a recitation of what is called the *Lex Talionis* . . . literally translated, ***the law of identical retaliation***, for the purpose of ***ensuring the punishment fits the crime***. This is the basis for the maxim, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” found in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21.

Interpretive question: In Revelation 18:6-8 we have an interpretive problem to address. In v. 6 we see the instruction to *pay back even as she has paid* . . . the principle of **identical retaliation** (“an eye for an eye”). But v. 6 then goes on to say that the punishment should be **double . . . give back to her double according to her deeds**. **So, which is it? Is it identical retaliation or double the punishment?**

- Scholars are split on this. Some scholars are of the view that God, in His role as holy Judge, is perfectly just in commanding twice the severity of punishment upon those who are in sin and gross disobedience and have trampled underfoot the blood of His Son and have unjustly persecuted and killed His saints. The scriptural support for this multiplied repayment is found in Exodus 22:1-9.

*Exodus 22:1-9— 1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, **he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.** 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, **he shall pay double.** 5 If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, **he shall make restitution** from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. 6 If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely **make restitution.** 7 If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him, and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, **he shall pay double.** 8 If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property. 9 For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; **he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.***

- As we see in this passage, the degree of restitution is dependent upon the crime. In some cases the restitution requirement is **five times**, in others **four times**, in others **double** and in some cases **equal value restitution**. So there is evidence of **double restitution** being prescribed in Scripture.
- But others explain the use of the phrase **double according to her deeds** as a figure of speech that signifies “complete restitution,” and that the offender endure the full scale of the anguish and torment she once dished out.
- Robert Thomas agrees with this view . . . “To requite in double measure meant to requite in full. It does not mean retribution double in severity to the seriousness of the sin. “Double” has the sense that the punishment should be the exact equivalent of the offense in the same way that a person who looks exactly like someone else is call his ‘double.’”

Interpretive question: In Revelation 18:6-8 we see instruction to the “executioners” of judgment upon Babylon. But who are the “executioners”? Who is it that executes judgment in Revelation 18:6-8?

- Some scholars are of the view that the “executioners” who are being instructed to *pay back even as she has paid* and to *give back to her double according to her deeds* are the angels who are pouring out the seven bowls of God’s judgment.
- Another view is that this instruction to unknown executioners is rhetorical; that there are no identified executioners because this statement in v. 6-8 is a rhetorical device used to emphasize the cause and certainty of God’s judgment and vengeance against Babylon. **In other words**, as events are unfolding we see that Babylon is, indeed, being repaid double for her iniquity.
- A third view is that the executioners are God’s enemies, themselves. This view sees God using antichrist and his allies to accomplish His purpose in destroying Babylon, as described in Revelation 17:16-17 . . .

Revelation 17:16-17— *16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, **these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.** 17 **For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.***

- If this third view is correct, it affirms what God has revealed about His secret will . . . that God uses the actions of ungodly creatures to accomplish His purposes. Thinking to be doing their own will, God’s enemies will actually accomplish God’s ordained will in destroying Babylon. This is the sort of action that is described in Proverbs 21:1 . . .

Proverbs 21:1— *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.*

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- Having examined several interpretive questions regarding Revelation 18:6-8, let’s now examine the judgments themselves.

Revelation 18:6-8— *6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.' 8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.*

- As we saw in v. 5 . . . the **God has remembered her iniquities** . . . God now judges Babylon by commanding *give back to her double according to her deeds*.
 - Just as Romans 6:23 teaches us that **the wages of sin is death**, here we learn that **Babylon’s “wages” have earned her double condemnation**.
 - Remember, Babylon is not a person, so no personal spiritual punishment is possible. Babylon, being a temporal entity is guilty of temporal sins. Therefore, her judgment will returned to her temporally in the manner of her destruction on the earth.

- In Revelation 18:6, the reference to ***the cup which she has mixed*** is a reference to Revelation 14:8 and Revelation 18:3 in which we learn that Babylon had seduced ***the nations and caused them to drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality***.
 - In Revelation 18:6 the word ***mixed*** carries the idea of “undiluted.” In other words, ***the cup which she has mixed*** is the ***undiluted wine of the passion of her immorality***. It is full strength.
- In Revelation 18:7 we see that God calls for ***the punishment to fit the crime*** in the phrase, ***to the degree***. In other words, for as severe as her crimes were, let her punishment be to that same degree . . . only double (v. 6).
- In v. 7 we also see the ***four sins for which Babylon was being judged***.
 - The first two sins are ***overt and visible***, while the third and fourth sins are ***covert and invisible***.

The overt, visible sins

1. *she glorified herself*

- This is the sin for which sinful men are most prone . . . the ***sin of pride***. The sin of pride not only seeks to glorify self, but in so doing it also seeks to rob God of His glory. And, as we are reminded in Isaiah 42:8 and James 4:6, only God is worthy of praise and glory.

Isaiah 42:8— “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

James 4:6— But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

2. *she lived sensuously*

- This is the sin for which sinful men desire to live. ***Sensuously*** (Greek: *strēniaō*) means “wantonly or luxuriously.” In the KJV the word is translated ***deliciously***. Revelation 18:7 and 9 are the only two places this word is used in the New Testament.
- We see the same concept in James 5:5. Though the word ***luxuriously*** is a different Greek word in James 5:5, the meaning is the same . . . living a lifestyle of pleasure, comfort, self-indulgence and excess.

James 5:5— You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

- **But then the question arises:** Is it sinful to live comfortably and in luxury?
 - There is no sin in living in comfort and ease. The sin comes from the manner in which that comfort and ease is attained. If riches and comfort come from sinful behavior toward God or other men, then it is sin. **And for those who live in Babylon in the Tribulation, they will**

only be permitted to retain their riches and their lavish lifestyles by idolatry and disobedience to God. The words of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 will never be more true than in the Tribulation . . .

2 Timothy 3:12— And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

The covert, invisible sins

- The third and fourth sins, stated in Revelation 18:7, are the same covert, invisible sins that ancient Babylon was judged for in Isaiah 47:7-10 . . .

*Isaiah 47:7-10— 7 "Yet **you said, 'I shall be a queen forever.'** These things you did not consider, nor remember the outcome of them. 8 Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me. **I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know loss of children.'** 9 But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: **Loss of children and widowhood.** They shall come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells. 10 "And **you felt secure in your wickedness** and said, 'No one sees me,' **Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;** For you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me.'*

3. she says, "I will sit as a queen"

- This third sin of **haughty self-confidence** is a sin of the heart that seeks to glorify self with a degree of self-centeredness that rejects and denies God as sovereign. As Robert Thomas says, this sin "is tantamount to self-deification." As Isaiah 47:10 says, **you felt secure in your wickedness.**
- Thomas also points out that this sin "puts her into the class of ancient Babylon, Tyre and Nineveh, who were noted for such boasting in the Old Testament."
- Ancient Babylon was condemned by God for this same attitude in Isaiah 47:7-9 . . .

*Isaiah 47:7-9— 7 "Yet **you said, 'I shall be a queen forever.'** These things you did not consider, nor remember the outcome of them. 8 Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me. **I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know loss of children.'** 9 But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: **Loss of children and widowhood.** They shall come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells. 10 "And **you felt secure in your wickedness** and said, 'No one sees me,' **Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;** For you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me.'*

4. she says, "I am not a widow, and will never see mourning"

- The fourth sin, also referred to in Isaiah 47:7-10, is one **self-confidence that assures herself that she has the strength and ability to prevent loss and suffering.**

- **Haughty self-confidence** is a sin of the heart that seeks to glorify self with a degree of self-centeredness that, as Robert Thomas says, “is tantamount to self-deification.” But this self-deification is really nothing more than self-delusion, because nothing could be further from the truth. **In fact, the opposite is true . . . Babylon will become a widow and will suffer great loss and mourning.**

- Then in Revelation 18:8 God reveals that the brazen and sinful attitude of Babylon will add to the intensity of her judgment . . . ***For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.***
 - The statement here speaks of the swiftness with which destruction and devastation will come upon Babylon.
 - The events . . . ***plagues, pestilence, mourning, famine and fire*** are terms that describe the utter devastation that will reduce Babylon to nothing. **Nothing of her will remain when the Lord returns.**
 - Arrogantly thinking she is strong and invulnerable, ***the Lord God who judges her is strong*** and will utterly destroy her.

- Then, following the description of the destruction of Babylon, in v. 9-19 we see three responses, or laments, of the world to Babylon’s devastation. These laments come from three different groups or categories of people. **First**, from ***the kings of the earth***; **second**, from ***the merchants of the earth***, and; **third**, from those who ***make their living by the sea***.

First lament (v. 9-10)

- The first lament is from the highest in position in society . . . ***the kings of the earth***

Revelation 18:9-10— 9 "And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

- The category of ***the kings of the earth*** includes the ***ten kings*** who are allied with ***the beast*** and **other world leaders**.
 - ***The kings of the earth*** have the leading role and are an integral part of the evil world system, as described in v. 9 by the phrase, ***who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her***. And because they have gained the most and stand to lose the most, their reaction is understandable . . . ***the will weep and lament over her***.
 - The terms ***weep and lament*** refer to the emotional and physical response to great grief.

- But, while they are **weeping and lamenting over her**, we also see in v. 9-10 their reaction to Babylon's destruction . . . ***they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment.***
 - This description reminds us of the destruction of **Sodom and Gomorrah** in Genesis 19:28 . . .

Genesis 19:28— and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.
 - **Note:** It is very likely that this destruction of Babylon occurs just prior to the Second Coming of the Lord.
 - The reason ***the kings of the earth*** attempt to distance themselves from the destruction of Babylon is self-preservation . . . they are attempting to avoid being caught up with her in her judgment.
- In v. 10 the declaration, '***Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come***' is proclaimed by ***the kings of the earth*** and expresses their **great sorrow and lamenting** of Babylon's destruction.
 - Referring to ***Babylon, the strong city*** is a reminder that ***the kings of the earth*** thought their evil world system was indestructible. They thought Babylon and their kingdoms could never be defeated. This proclamation of double ***woe*** express their profound grief.
 - The statement, ***in one hour your judgment has come***, refers to the suddenness and swiftness of God's judgment. ***The kings of the earth*** are astounded that their world system could be so suddenly and completely destroyed. They are in shock at how quickly and completely their kingdoms are gone.

Question: ***The kings of the earth*** are shocked and astounded that their world empire is so suddenly and completely destroyed. Why? Why are they so surprised?

Second lament (v. 11-17a)

- The second lament is from those who benefitted the most, financially, from the evil world system. It is a truth that while many men seek **political and military power**, there are others who seek after **the power that comes from wealth**.

Revelation 18:11— "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more;
- In Revelation 18:11 we see that the wailing of ***the merchants of the earth*** is greater than that of ***the kings of the earth*** because of their financial loss.
 - The destruction of ***the beast's*** capital and headquarters brings about a collapse of the economy because the merchants no longer have buyers for their goods . . . ***because no one buys their cargoes any more.***

- It is ironic that during their prosperous times these very merchants belonged to a system that denied the right to buy or sell goods to anyone without ***the mark of the beast*** (Rev. 13:17). But now **no one is able to buy or sell**.

- In Revelation 18:12-13 John lists the goods that are no longer bought or sold because of the economic collapse.

Revelation 18:12-13— 12 cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, 13 and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.

- The list of goods in v. 12-13 are listed in **7 categories**:

1. Precious wares— *cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls*

- These items occur in God's denunciation of faithless Israel's worldly extravagance in Ezekiel 16:13 ...

Ezekiel 16:13— "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.

2. Materials of rich attire— *fine linens and purple and silk and scarlet*

- The word ***fine linens*** (Greek: *bussos*) refers to garments made from Egyptian flax (600 count Egyptian cotton) which were very expensive and delicate.
- The word ***purple*** (Greek: *porphura*) refers to fabrics treated with purple dye extracted from shellfish through a painstaking process, one drop at a time. Such dye was very expensive and the term is synonymous with luxury and extravagance in John's day.

- Recall that in Acts 16:14 the city of Thyatira was famous for being a city in which purple fabric was sold

Acts 16:14— And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

- At the time in which Revelation was written, the Romans and their Caesars were known for their formidable military and Caesar's imperial robes of purple.
- In the first century A.D. ***silk*** was obtained by importation from China and India, making this precious material both expensive and rare.

- The word **scarlett** (Greek: *kokkinos*) is a color that is synonymous in Revelation with **the beast** (Rev. 17:3) and **the harlot** (Rev. 17:4) and was obtained from **kermes oak trees**, found in Asia Minor.

3. Materials for costly furniture— *and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble*

- **Citron wood** is a scented wood that was the most valuable wood found in ancient times. It was used for making ornamental furniture, bowls, and luxurious tabletops. Its highly polished grain featured beautiful, swirling patterns. Here in Revelation 18:12 it symbolizes extreme wealth and opulence.
- Throughout history **ivory** has been highly valuable. It, too, was a sign of great wealth in ancient times.
- The reference to **every article made from very costly wood** refers to other rare and expensive varieties of wood that were imported for the wealthy to enjoy.
- The use of **bronze and iron and marble** were also synonymous with wealth.

4. Precious spices— *and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense*

- **Cinnamon** is made from the bark of a tree originally only found in East Asia and South China. In Rome it was used in incense, medicine, perfume and a flavoring found in some wines.
 - In the Old Testament **cinnamon** was an ingredient in anointing oil (Exodus 25:6) and is one of the fragrances used on the bed of an adulteress (Proverbs 7:17).
- **Spice** was from the seeds of a fragrant shrub and was used for perfumes and aromatic balms for the hair.
- **Incense** was an expensive aromatic. Not used for religious purposes, when burned it produced a perfumed smoke enjoyed by the rich.
- **Perfume** (Greek: *muron*) is the word that is also translated **myrrh**. It is a general term for the type of expensive sweet-smelling ointment perfume desired in the first century.
- **Frankincense** was a fragrant resin that was imported from south Arabia and was used for perfume for the body and was also an ingredient of **incense**.

5. Varieties of fine food— *and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat*

- **Wine and olive oil** were very common, but expensive products consumed in first century Rome.
- **Fine flour and wheat** refers to higher quality grain products consumed by the wealthy.

6. Merchandise for agricultural and domestic use— *and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots*

- **Cattle** were used primarily for **milk** and **not beef**. Interestingly, when the bowl judgments are poured out at the end of the tribulation, all the world's fresh water sources will be spoiled and milk will become extremely valuable.
- **Sheep** were used primarily for their **wool** and not as a food source in ancient times.
- In a society where most people walked everywhere, **horses and chariots** were valuable for transportation. The term **chariots** refers to four-wheeled coaches that were only used by the rich.

7. Trafficking of human cargo— *and slaves and human lives*

- Though it is listed last, this final category of “merchandise,” literally **slaves and souls of men**, is the most evil. In our day **human trafficking** is an evil scourge upon humanity. The taking and enslaving of men, women and children for various forms of exploitation is one of the worst forms of evil and depravity that man can perpetrate.
- The idea that you can buy and sell **the souls of men** is an unthinkable evil and is the greatest reason why **the merchants of the earth** deserve the judgment that comes upon them.
- Then, having listed the merchandise **the merchants of the earth** once peddled, in v. 14 we have a summary statement of what **the merchants of the earth** are now experiencing . . .

Revelation 18:14— *"And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will **no longer find them**.*

- Everything they held as valuable and most precious are gone . . . destroyed . . . and will **no longer be found**.

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- With their merchandise and the source of their wealth and livelihoods destroyed, in Revelation 18:15-17 we read the lamentations of **the merchants of the earth**.

Revelation 18:15-17a— *¹⁵ The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, ¹⁶ saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; ¹⁷ for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!'*

- With the source of their wealth gone, all **the merchants of the earth** can do is lament their new condition. What had once made them rich was now gone.
- As they lament their loss, **the merchants of the earth** are described as **standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment** while they are **weeping and mourning**.
 - But this **weeping and mourning** is not for Babylon, it is for themselves. Yes, they **weep and mourn**, but only because their businesses have been destroyed.
 - And the reason they **stand at a distance** is **because of the fear of her torment**. They know that God's judgment is now raining down on their precious world system and they are trying to

avoid getting caught up in the destruction and judgment . . . but they won't be able to. Their judgment is coming . . . soon.

- Despite ***standing at a distance, the merchants of the earth*** don't lament the evil that they were a part of. They continue to call their evil world economic system ***the great city***, describing her with loving remembrance as ***she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls***. They don't repent of the evil system that they were a part of. Even as they watch her being destroyed, they still love her and would gladly be part of rebuilding her, if it were possible.
- But rebuilding Babylon will not be possible. Like ***the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth*** are astounded to see how quickly their precious economic system is being destroyed . . . ***laid waste***, never to be seen again.

Third lament (v. 17b-19)

- The third group to lament the destruction of economic Babylon are identified in v. 17 as ***every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea***.

Revelation 18:17b-19— 17 . . . And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' 19 And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!'

- We previously saw that with the sounding of **the second trumpet that the one-third of the earths navigable water were fouled and one-third of the ships were destroyed**.
 - Then, in Revelation 16:3, we see that with the pouring out of the **second bowl** that **all of the world's seas become as blood and every living thing in the sea died**.
 - It is likely that the destruction of the world's seas is being referred to here with the lamentations of the "sea people."
- Here in Revelation 18:17-19 we see the same reaction to the destruction of Babylon we saw earlier by ***the kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth*** . . . those who ***make their living by the sea*** are ***crying out in mourning***.
 - Notice that their mourning is not for the evil and wickedness that Babylon's wicked system perpetrated upon the earth. Their crying and mourning is only for their own personal loss, that ***all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth*** now saw the source of their wealth destroyed.
 - There is not lamenting for the evil system they were will participants it. They still view Babylon as a ***great city***.

- And like the **kings of the earth** and **the merchants of the earth**, these “**sea people**” are shocked and amazed at the speed of Babylon’s destruction . . . **in one hour she has been laid waste!**
- In our day we have witnessed how the shutting off the Strait of Hormuz has been so disruptive to the world’s economy. That is only a miniscule part of the world’s oceans. Imagine if all the oceans in the world were blood and unusable? Total economic destruction!

- Then, in stark contrast to the mourning and lamenting by **those who dwell on the earth**, in Revelation 18:20 the angel who previously called for God’s people to, “**Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues**” (Rev. 18:4) now calls for the **saints and apostles and prophets** in heaven to rejoice . . .

Revelation 18:20— “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”

- This call to **rejoice over her, O heaven** is the same reaction we previously saw by **those who dwell on the earth** when **the beast** killed the **two witnesses** and **rejoiced** at seeing their dead bodies lying in the street (Rev. 11:10).
- Here in Revelation 18:20 God’s people are vindicated and their prayers and cries for God’s justice are answered (Rev. 6:9-10).
- Here in Revelation 18:20 we see the angel instructing three distinct groups **in heaven to rejoice**.
 1. The term **saints** is a general term for **all of the redeemed**.
 2. The term **apostles** is used in the usual New Testament sense that specifically refers to Christ’s representatives who were **eyewitnesses of Jesus’ death and resurrection**.
 3. The term **prophet** here is used of those who preached the truth of Jesus as Savior and Redeemer and here refers to those who were persecuted for Jesus’ sake.
- Then, having instructed the **saints in heaven to rejoice**, the angel gives the reason for this rejoicing . . . **because God has pronounced judgment for you against her**.
 - Here, in this explanatory statement, the angel is addressing God’s judgment of Babylon in favor of the **saints**.
 - By declaring that **God has pronounced judgment for you against her**, we are being told that God, **the righteous Judge**, has decided the case against those who persecuted you, many of you unto death, in your favor. God has answered you imprecatory prayers and has judged the wicked, as you have prayed for.

- The final division of Revelation 18 is v. 21-24. In this final division is the conclusion of God’s pronouncement of judgment on Babylon that began in Revelation 18:2-3.

Revelation 18:2-3— *2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."*

Revelation 18:21— *And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer."*

- Both Revelation 18:2 and 18:21 declare the **fall** and **destruction** of **Babylon, the great city**. Here in v. 21 we see a third angel join in the scene, **a strong angel**.
 - Here in v. 21 we are told that **a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea**.
 - The phrase, **a stone like a great millstone** is used analogously to describe the very large size of the **stone** the **strong angel** is about to throw **into the sea**. **In other words**, the phrase **a stone like a great millstone** is intended to emphasize **the size** of the stone, **not its function** as a millstone.
 - Here in Revelation 18:21 the act of the **strong angel** throwing this great **stone into the sea** is a fulfillment of God's revelation to the prophet Jeremiah regarding Babylon's ultimate demise in Jeremiah 51:61-64 ...

Jeremiah 51:61-64— *61 Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "As soon as you come to **Babylon**, then see that you read all these words aloud, 62 and say, 'Thou, O LORD, hast promised concerning this place to cut it off, so that there will be nothing dwelling in it, whether man or beast, but it will be a perpetual desolation.' 63 And it will come about as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you will tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, 64 and say, 'Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again, because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her; and they will become exhausted.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.*

- The act of throwing something into the depths of the sea is symbolic of that thing never being seen again.
- Imagine throwing a great stone into the Mariana Trench, the deepest known part of the ocean in the western Pacific. The Mariana Trench is over 36,000' deep ... over 6 miles deep. To compare, the Titanic sank in 12,500' of water and it was thought to be a act of engineering genius for men to build a remotely piloted submarine that was able to reach it. So, for an object to be in a part of the ocean that is three times deeper than Titanic would be symbolic of being so deep that it would be impossible to recover. That is what is symbolized here in Revelation 18:21 ... **gone and never to be seen again**. As God tells Jeremiah, **'Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again, because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her.'**

- Then, having stated that *Babylon will sink down and not rise again*, in Revelation 18:22-23 we have a description of **Babylon's internal deterioration**.

Revelation 18:22-23— *22 And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; 23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.*

- In Revelation 18:21-23 we have an emphatic description of the total and complete destruction of Babylon with 6 “never again” statements.

1. *Babylon, the great city . . . will never again be found* (v. 21)

2. *the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters . . . every type of music . . . will never again be heard* (v. 22)

3. *craftsmen of any craft . . . will never again be found* (v. 22)

4. *the sound of a mill . . . industry of any kind . . . will never again be heard* (v. 22)

5. *the light of a lamp . . . will never again shine* (v. 23)

6. *the voice of the bridegroom and bride . . . wedding celebrations . . . will never again be heard* (v. 23)

- The totality of Babylon's destruction . . . the complete absence of Babylon's very existence . . . will stand in stark contrast to the glory of the Lord's Millennial Kingdom, which He will institute when He returns in glorious victory!

- Following the 6 “never again” statements in v. 21-23, the final phrase of v. 23 gives **two of the reasons for Babylon's destruction** . . .

Revelation 18:23— . . . for *[because]* your merchants were the great men of the earth, *because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery*.

- The first reason given, that *because your merchants were great men of the earth*, points to the fact in addition to the great evils these **merchants** committed by trading in evil and wickedness, they also enjoyed the evil pleasures of their evil business dealings.
 - **In other words**, not only did they provide the goods and services for Babylon's immoral lifestyle, but they indulged in that lifestyle, themselves.
- The second stated reason given, *because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery*, is really a subsidiary of the first reason.

- **In other words**, it is because of their deception and sorcery that the merchants of the earth became “great men” (wealthy).
- In the phrase, *deceived by your sorcery*, the word *sorcery* (Greek: *pharmakeia*) is the cognate of our English word, **pharmacology**. In the dark arts . . . witchcraft, sorcery, incantations, voodoo, magic, divination and necromancy . . . the use of drugs and potions are common to induce an altered state that makes people more susceptible to the introduction of demonic activity.
- Again, not only did the *merchants* supply the drugs necessary for these depraved practices and lifestyle, but they participated in that lifestyle, themselves. **They were both the suppliers and the users.**
- Revelation 18 closes in v. 24 with a statement that carries over from the second reasons of v. 23 . . .

Revelation 18:24— 23 . . . because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.

- Robert Thomas points out that Jerusalem has a long history of shedding righteous blood, but so does Babylon. Violence and great bloodshed are synonymous with the Tribulation. Many people in Revelation are responsible for shedding innocent blood: ***the earth dwellers, the beast, the kings of the earth***. The whole world of fallen mankind stood in opposition to God and His people.
- The book of Revelation looks to the future and a time when a massive system will encompass and unite the world in its animosity against Christianity.