

REVELATION 18

Introductory Comments:

- This chapter is probably the most graphic and explicit reference to God's wrath and judgment in all of Scripture. The point here is very clear: God will answer the cry of the saints and will punish the wicked in the End. No "happy smiley-face in the sky" here! God's judgment is just as real and just as severe as His grace and mercy are for those who believe. He does nothing half-way. Thus, the emphasis in this chapter is on the fall of Babylon (Satan's kingdom, consisting of he and his demons and all unbelievers). It is a loud cry for repentance to all! Heed this warning now, for soon it will be too late! Much of the material here is patterned after the prophets (cf. Isaiah 23-24; Jer. 51; Ezek. 26-27), where similar condemnation and calling for repentance is seen.

Rev. 18:1-3

- "Another Angel, having great authority" – This Angel is none other than Christ Himself (see notes on ch. 10). All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ (cf. Matt. 28:18-20), and He will be the One to Judge all people on the Last Day.
- The descriptive language here ("every" and "all") shows how widespread and successful the deceptions and temptations of "Babylon the Great" have been in the world.

Rev. 18:4-8

- "Come out of her My people" – This is further proof that this Angel is Christ, for He says, "My people." A created angel would not say this. Here, our Lord pleads with us to remain strong and refrain from the temptations of the Prostitute of Babylon. We must not make the mistake of believing that we are fulfilling our Lord's plea by simply refraining from indulging in the crass immorality of the Prostitute. Truth be told, her immorality is often not crass and not clearly visible. She is moved by the "father of lies," Satan himself, who puts before us versions of Christianity that look appealing. They seem pious and good, but are not. Thus, our Lord's plea here is to remain steadfast in His Word and to avoid falling prey to Satan's deceptions which will land us in a perverted version of Christianity, which is no Christianity at all. *"Our Lord's appeal is not a call for physical separation from a literal city. It is a call to shun the temptations and enticements of man made religion. At the heart of all the religions man devises for himself is self-righteousness and self-reliance. The Lutheran Confessions call the innate tendency of man's sinful nature to depend upon one's own efforts and good works the 'opinio legis' (opinion of the law). The Confessions warn that this universal human inclination seeks to compromise and undermine the teaching of God's grace in Christ at every opportunity (Apol. IV, 146). Since the beginning, the fundamental temptation has been to spurn the gracious love of God in favor of human effort so that we might ourselves be like gods. This is the essence of the anti-Christian religion embodied by Babylon the Great. Beneath the deceiving façade of Christian piety, it glories in human wisdom and wealth, luxury and power" (White, Revelation, p. 541).*
- "God has remembered her iniquities" – While God does not remember the sins of those who repent and believe in Christ (cf. Jer. 31:34 et. al.), He does, and will, remember the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving. In the same way, believers in Christ receive a never-ending flow of grace ("grace upon grace", i.e. "double grace"), while unbelievers who belong to the kingdom of Babylon will receive "double for her deeds." The wicked will be judged completely and fully for their deeds, paying for their sins for all of eternity in Hell.
- "Her plagues will come in a single day" – Judgment Day; the Day when Christ returns in great glory to judge all people.
- "She will be burned up with fire" – Shows the graphic and very real nature of the punishment to come upon all unbelievers. Scripture throughout describes the eternal torment in Hell as being

burned by fire. Chapters 19 and 20 describe the eternal abode of all unbelievers as the “lake of fire.”

Rev. 18:9-24

- While we could take up many pages to comment on all of the descriptive language in the rest of this chapter, it is enough to point out that what is repeatedly described throughout is that the judgment of the wicked (Satan, demons, and all unbelievers) will be severe (painful and eternal). In this life, the wicked had no desire for the Truth. They indulged their sinful cravings and aligned themselves with the religion of the Great Prostitute. They will be repayed for their sins in full in the End. And this will result in great rejoicing among the heavenly hosts (v. 20 and 19:1-10), for God will avenge the innocent blood of His saints.
- As mentioned above, this chapter serves as a great warning to all people, including believers. God does not condone sin and does not tolerate false religion. Believers are to be diligent in clinging to God’s Truth, no matter how politically incorrect or unpopular that may be in our day and age. We live at a time when true Christianity is very rare. The devil has infiltrated Christendom with a plethora of false teachers and teachings. What’s worse, most people who call themselves Christian believe that the differences in doctrine and practice from one Christian denomination (or, non-denomination) to another is unimportant. This is a direct result of Satan’s influence through the Prostitute of Babylon in the world. The point of this chapter and, indeed, of all of Revelation, is to make it vividly clear to us that we must “endure to the End” if we are to receive the “crown of glory.” This means that we align ourselves with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church established by our Lord, which displays the marks of having the Gospel proclaimed in its purity and the Sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution. Thus, enduring to the End means that we live lives of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, relying on Him alone, and never on ourselves, for forgiveness, life, and salvation. All those, whether they call themselves Christian or not, who add to, or take away from, the completed work of Jesus Christ in any way, are daughters of Babylon. In short, to be Christian means to be in the world, but not of the world, and this chapter shows in great and graphic detail what will happen to all who follow the principles of the world over and against the principles of God’s kingdom.