

# Woe! Woe, O Great City, In One Hour She Has Been Brought to Ruin

## 18: 9-19

**DIG:** Why do the kings see this destruction from a far off? Where are they? How will the voices from the world greet the fall of Babylon? Why do they mourn?

**REFLECT:** Would it break your heart if you saw the things of this world go up in smoke? What does this teach you about **God**? How can we face the world system every day in our lives, yet not be a part of it? Can you serve two masters? Where is your treasure?

Nothing so clearly reveals the hardness of sinners' hearts as their lack of sorrow over sin. Through the years of devastating judgments, the people of the earth will steadfastly refuse to **weep** or **mourn over** their sin. But they will **weep and mourn over** the ruin of **Babylon**.<sup>396</sup>

There will be **three groups** mourning on the earth. First, will be **the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury. They will see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her (18:9)**. These are the seven kings who will reign with the antichrist and submit their authority to him. Whatever power or authority they hold, it will be given to them by the king of **Babylon**. Seeing their authority, wealth and influence evaporate in **one hour, they will weep and mourn over her. They will be able to see the smoke of her burning from a far off (Genesis 19:28; Isaiah 34:10; Joel 2:30)**, because **they will see** it from the Valley of Jezreel in Israel where they are gathered for the first stage of the Campaign of Armageddon (**Jeremiah 50:46**).<sup>397</sup>

As they watch **her burn, they will be terrified at her torment**. As the crown jewel of the beast's empire, it had survived the overwhelming judgments of the Great Tribulation up to that point. **She** seemed to be invincible. So **her** swift destruction will shock and amaze them. **They will stand far off** and cry out in anguish: **Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come (18:10)!** All their plans will be destroyed in **one hour**. How foolish would we be to spend our whole lifetime based on the world's system and then watch it crumble before our eyes. How foolish that we would waste our lives living for the wrong thing.

The second group of mourners will be **the merchants of the earth** who will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more. Babylon will become the economic center of the world, the center of business and world trade, a city characterized by these luxury items: cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and the slave trade of the bodies and souls of men and women (also see Ezekiel 27:12-25). But, everything they have lived for will be crushed right before their eyes (18:11-13).

Continuing their lament, they will say: The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered (18:14). The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will not go near the burned out ruins. They will stand far off in their executive suites halfway around the world watching on television, they will be terrified at her torment. Swiftly becoming paupers, they will weep and mourn and cry out: Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin (18:15-17a)! They had gained the world, but lost their souls.

Our trust needs to be in Christ, not in **great wealth**. Jesus says this to us today: **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be . . . but seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:19-34).**

The third and final group will be **the transporters of goods** who had become rich from their association with **Babylon**, just as Phoenicians had done in the ancient world. Now there was no more business. **Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off shore and weep (18:17b).**

The lament over **Babylon** will be similar to the weeping over the fall of the beautiful city of **Tyre**. King Nebuchadnezzar wiped out the original city on the mainland, so the Phoenicians rebuilt it on an island just off the coast. They made it their capital and thought it was invincible. But Alexander the Great came along and pushed the ruins of the old city into the sea, making a causeway out to the island. His troops walked out on dry land and destroyed the rebuilt city. People will compare the destruction of **Tyre** to the destruction of **Babylon**

because the same things were said of both. When Tyre was destroyed, people cried out: **Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea? When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth (Ezekiel 27:32b-33)** When they see the smoke of her burning, they will cry out from their ships: **Was there ever a city like this great city (18:18)?**

In a typical ancient expression of grief, **they will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning sob: Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin (18:19).** No longer will **Babylon** control the world politically or economically. Like the Titanic, this seemingly indestructible **city** will go down in flames.

To some degree or another, we are a part of this world system. What we need to find out is how we can be **in the world**, but **not of the world** (John 17:11 and 16). How can we face the world's system every day of our lives, yet not love it. The issue is not **money**; it is **the love of money** that we need to avoid (Hebrews 13:5). Not to make **money** my goal or my priority. How do I live in the midst of all of this? I have needs. But how do I meet my needs and still acknowledge **Christ** as number one in my life? **No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24).** How can I face that issue in my life? Which master do I **serve**?