

• Fourth of seven words of judgement

We are looking at the fourth of the seven words of judgement against 'the woman sitting on seven hills'¹. Christians are to separate themselves from the spirit of 'Babylon'². They must not be misled when sin is piling higher and higher³. God's judgement will be fair but fearful⁴. Judgement will come to each person 'to the extent that' he or she has sinned⁵.

18:4-20
18:4
18:5
18:6
18:7

God's punishment will be sudden

God's punishment will be sudden. ⁸*'Because of this, in one day these disasters shall come upon her: death and sorrow and great hunger.'*

God's punishment will eventually lead to destruction

God's punishment will eventually lead to destruction, accompanied by weeping and wailing among the lost. First there are great punishments; then there is extermination. The city – Babylon, symbolizing the world in its licentious and wicked and persecuting ways – will cease to exist altogether. *'She will be utterly burned with fire; for the Lord God who judged her is strong.'* Kings and rulers of various kinds will be associated in the judgement of 'Babylon'. They will see their much-loved city of sin disappearing under the anger of God. ⁹*The kings of the earth, who committed fornication and shared the city's wicked luxuries, will weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning.* Those who have been involved in Babylon's sins are watching as the city is being destroyed. They are weeping and wailing at the loss of their sin-city as it is being exterminated.

• Babylon will cease to exist

• Those involved in Babylon's sins weep as it is destroyed

• Weeping in terror

They will be weeping in terror because the same judgement is about to come on them. They get as far away from the city as they can. That is something they should have done **before** its judgement. Like Lot wanting to be close to Sodom they had wanted to be close to the sin-city, Babylon. Now they want to stand far away. ¹⁰*They will stand at a distance, terrified at her torment. They will call out, 'It is terrible! Terrible! Look at the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgement has come.'* The words remind us of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Lot's wife who looked longingly back to Sodom as it was being destroyed in the fire of God's judgement.

• Should have abandoned Babylon before its judgement

• Like Lot wanting to be close to Sodom

• Business people are also caught up in Babylon's judgement

Not only are rulers caught up in Babylon's judgement. Business people and 'the merchants of the earth' are involved too. ¹¹*And the merchants of the earth weep and are sorrowful about Babylon. For no one is buying their goods any more.* ¹²*No one buys their cargoes of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet cloth. No one buys any of their scented wood or any of their articles of ivory or their expensive wooden utensils or their bronze or iron or marble.* ¹³*No one buys their cinnamon or spice or incense or ointment or frankincense. Nor do they buy wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, or cattle or sheep, horses or chariots, slaves or human lives.*

• Sinners witness the loss of the civilization that was their sinful pride and joy

One notices in all of this that the judgement that is being pictured here is taking place in the history of the world. It is like the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah (which, of course, also took place during the history of this world). In John's vision sinners are witnessing the loss of the entire civilization that was their sinful pride and joy. It is not exactly

• *A picture of hell on earth*

• *Sinners will not repent but will weep at their loss*

• *Seven groups of articles:*

(i) *Treasures*

(ii) *Fabrics*

(iii) *Housing materials*

(iv) *Herbs and oils*

(v) *Foods*

(vi) *Animals*

(vii) *Human beings*

• *Before destruction, Babylon is the object of scorn*

• *The wicked lose their treasures*

• *Babylon had seemed so permanent but now the entire city is utterly defeated and nothing is left*

Today's Babylons are as doomed as ancient Babylon and Rome

hell that is being pictured here although – like Sodom and Gomorrah's punishment – it is a foreshadowing of the final experience of hell-torment. But this (one might say) is hell on earth, hell in this world, hell in the loss of the sins and luxuries which men and women have made their delight. One day – says the vision given to John – Babylon will fall. Wicked luxuries and sinful delights will be shown up for what they really are, and will be exterminated in the fire of God's judgement. Sinners will not become repentant about it, but they will weep and wail at their great loss.

A study of the list shows seven groups of articles: **treasures** (gold, silver, precious stone, pearls), **fabrics** (linen, purple, silk, scarlet cloth), **materials** for furnishing houses (scented wood, ivory, expensive wooden utensils, bronze, iron, marble), sweet-smelling **herbs or oils** (cinnamon, spice, incense, ointment, frankincense), **foods** (wine, oil, fine flour, wheat), domestic **animals** (cattle, sheep, horses for chariots) and **human beings** (slaves, human lives).

In verse 14, Babylon is directly addressed. Before the city is exterminated she is the object of scorn. *'And the good things which you wanted so much have gone from you. And all your riches and splendid things have perished so as to be available to you no longer. And people will no longer find these things any more.'* Babylon is annihilated. The luxuries of the indulgent and wicked disappear altogether from the city. They 'perish', says John, and he explains his meaning. They no longer exist. The wicked lose their treasures altogether. ¹⁵*The merchants who became wealthy by selling these things in Babylon will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and show great sorrow.* ¹⁶*They say, 'It is terrible! Terrible! Look at the great city! She was dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet. She was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!'* ¹⁷*For in one hour all these riches have been destroyed.'* Babylon which was once admired is now admired no longer. Babylon had seemed so permanent and wonderful and ever lasting, but now the entire city – standing for worldly pagan loose-living – comes to the point where it is utterly defeated and nothing is left but the smoke which is the evidence of her extermination.

In the symbolism of the book of Revelation worldly oppressive wickedness is doomed to pass away under the preaching of the gospel and under the judgements of God. It was found in ancient Babylon and ancient Rome but is still with us today. But today's Babylons are as doomed as yesterday's Babylon and yesterday's Rome. One day sin and ungodliness will be utterly defeated, and sinners – even in this world – will start weeping and wailing at their loss.



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