

Revelation Chapter 18 - John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called "The Danger of Stuff". When I say "stuff", I mean material possessions.
 - a) One of the great issues that Christians ponder is, "Is it ok to be rich? Is it ok to collect things? Is it ok to have hobbies? Do I have to get rid of everything I own to please God?"
 - b) To answer, let's start with a fundament point: One of the 10 Commandments is "Do not steal". If it is a sin to steal, than it is ok to "own things". There is no commandment to take a vow of poverty.
 - c) In the Gospels, a rich ruler asked Jesus what He must do to be saved. Jesus told this guy if he wants to be "perfect", he has sell all that he had. (Ref. Matthew 19:21, et. al.) The point is that guy was obsessed with money and Jesus was testing him to see if he loved God more than money. Jesus never taught this as a general principal.
 - d) That is what it comes down to: Do we love God more than (material) stuff? If Jesus asked us to give up our material possessions or our favorite hobby, would we? The key is not how much money we have or what hobbies we have. The question is, "Is Jesus a priority over our stuff"? If the cost was to give up all we had to follow Jesus, would we be willing to make that commitment?
2. On that happy note, ☺ welcome to my study of Revelation Chapter 18.
 - a) In this chapter, we are dealing with the "Fall of Babylon". Let me recap the last few chapters and put Chapter 18 in perspective. Then I'll tie it back to my lesson title.
 - b) Revelation is about Jesus being "revealed" to us. It is about the events that lead up to Jesus Second Coming and that actual event of His coming, which is in Chapter 19.
 - c) Prior to Jesus Second Coming, the earth is judged. A major reason for this is God is making one big "last call" to see who wants to be saved and who doesn't. By the time we get to Chapter 15, one gets the impression all that who are saved are now in heaven.
 - d) Chapters 15-16 are specific judgments focusing on those who persecuted Christians in this time span called "The Great Tribulation". That time span covers most of Revelation.
 - e) Chapters 17 and 18 "backtrack" in time. They go back in time to give more details about a specific event that happens during the Great Tribulation. We are now back to a time when some Christians were still on earth during this time frame.
 - i) We know this because Verse 4 is a plea by God for "His people" to come out of Babylon. Well, if God's people are still there, and Chapters 15-16 were a final judgment on nonbelievers, Chapters 17 and 18 are backtracking in time.
 - f) An angel announced at the beginning of Chapter 17 that the purpose of that section of Revelation was to show the judgment of a woman that "rides the beast". Chapter 17 specifically stated that the "woman" was not a literal woman but a city. The "beast" refers to the antichrist and a worldwide empire that is setup during this Great Tribulation.
 - g) The city itself is "Babylon". The question scholars have been debating for centuries, is does this refer to the ancient city of Babylon, or Rome, or some other city. I'm not here to solve the debate. I'm here to explain that whatever and wherever this literal city of Babylon is, God will judge it. It appears to be the headquarters of this final, great world empire run by the antichrist.
 - h) Chapter 17 focused on the "spiritual" aspect of Babylon. The woman (city) being judged is a false-religion associated with Babylon.
 - i) Chapter 18 focuses on the government (i.e., power) and material aspect of Babylon.
 - i) Some scholars think Chapters 17 and 18 are describing two separate cities.
 - ii) Some scholars think they are describing different aspects of the same city.
 - iii) For the purpose of this study, it doesn't matter. In the last lesson, the focus was on false religion. In this lesson, the focus is on judgment of government power (that is against God), and the danger of materialism.

3. Here are some key differences between Chapters 17 and 18:
 - a) In Chapter 17, there is no mention of believers.
 - b) In Chapter 18, there is a warning to believers to come out of Babylon. (Verse 4).
 - c) In Chapter 17, there is no rejoicing over Babylon's destruction.
 - d) In Chapter 18, God commands the rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon (Verse 20).
 - e) What's the point?
 - i) Chapter 17 focuses on the spiritual aspect of Babylon, i.e., false religion.
 - ii) Chapter 18 focuses on the material aspect of Babylon.
 - iii) Chapter 18 appears to be the greater danger to believers: The danger of power and especially materialism. This is why I call this chapter, "The Danger of Stuff".
4. The point is for Christians to understand that a much bigger risk to our Christian faith is the danger of power and the danger of material wealth.
 - a) Remember Satan's goal: He can't take away your salvation. He can make us ineffective witnesses for God. Satan's time on earth is limited. There are only "x" people who go to heaven. When that "x" number is reached, Satan's time is up. Therefore, Satan wants to make us ineffective witnesses for God as to not reach number "x".
 - b) One way to make us ineffective is persecution. Dead Christians can't share their faith. The "problem", from Satan's standpoint, is persecution draws us closer to God and makes us pray more. Historically, Christianity has grown during such persecution periods.
 - i) A greater and more effective weapon for Satan is to get us to care about things other than God. Thus, we are tempted with power and "stuff". Since there is only so much power to go around, material blessings are the greatest weapon.
 - c) This leads us back to some of the opening questions about material blessings: Is it ok to be rich? Is it ok to own things? The answer to that question is an individual one. The real answer is, "How does that "stuff" affect your relationship with Jesus Christ? Does it help or hinder your ability to be a good witness for God? Are we telling the truth? ☺
 - i) Some people are blessed with great incomes and support major ministries. Such people may not give every dollar they owe, but they do give large amounts of their wealth to help other ministries go.
 - ii) Christians are called to "give". An issue of giving is to trust God with providing us with our future financial needs. Giving is an example of "faith" in action.
 - d) In this chapter, we are going to read that Babylon is materially and politically wealthy.
 - i) Kings got their power from Babylon.
 - ii) Businessman got wealthy from the success of Babylon.
 - iii) In this chapter, God tells "His people" to get out of Babylon.
 - a) This chapter also spends time predicting Babylon's destruction.
 - b) What's more, this chapter calls for us to praise God for its destruction!
 - iv) The key to this chapter is not to look at a globe and guess which city is really Babylon. The key is to look at our lives today and ponder, "Is my witness to God being ineffective due to power or money? Where is my priority in life?"
 - e) Now that we're all (myself included) properly guilt ridden, ☺ I can start the lesson.
5. Chapter 18, Verse 1: After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.
 - a) Chapter 18 begins with "After this". We should then wonder, "After what"?
 - i) The answer is the events of Chapter 17.
 - b) Chapter 17 was about the judgment of a woman called a prostitute, which was really a city. Near the end of that chapter, we read the city was burned with fire. That is why some people think there are "Two Babylon's": The one burned with fire in Chapter 17 and the one being described here in Chapter 18. The other theory is that Chapter 18 backtracks in order to emphasize the governmental and material power of Babylon as opposed to the spiritual aspect emphasized in Chapter 17.

- c) The next phrase is John saying, "I saw another angel coming down from heaven".
 - i) In Chapters 15-16, John saw seven angels that had the final seven judgments on the earth. In Chapter 17, one of those seven angels gave John a "guided tour" of the judgment on Babylon.
 - ii) Here in Chapter 18, we have a "new angel". It is not one of the seven from the previous chapter.
 - iii) Here is something interesting we can conclude about angels: They don't all look alike. John knew this one was different from the previous seven.
 - d) The last sentence says, "He (this angel) had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor."
 - i) How did John know this angel had great authority from heaven? Don't know. Maybe John wrote this in hindsight based on what the angel did. Maybe John saw this angel's authorization papers from heaven. ☺ Somehow, John just knew this. What I suspect it means is because this angel is "illuminated", John assumed the power that given to this angel. Either that, or the angel gave off a lot of light.
 - ii) Here's the important part: "The earth was illuminated by his splendor."
 - a) What's happening is this angel is about to make an announcement.
 - b) God wants to get the world's attention, so this angel is illuminated.
 - c) The way I personally see this is the angel flies over one part of the world, and then satellite television picks up the event and the world sees it. I could be wrong, but that's how I visualize this happening today.
 - iii) Verse 2 is the message itself.
6. Verse 2: With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
- a) Let's discuss "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!"
 - i) When a word is repeated twice, it is done for emphasis. It is like when we say in English, "this food is very very good".
 - ii) Notice the word "is". That is present tense. In Verse 4, this same angel will tell believers in effect to "Get out of Babylon". My point here is this angel is telling the future as if it has already happened. This angel is giving a prophecy (prediction) about the fall of Babylon as if it is already done.
 - b) In the second sentence the angel says, "Babylon has become a home for demons..."
 - i) Remember that the city of Babylon will be the capital of this final empire. It is lead by the antichrist. The antichrist is a human that is influenced by Satan himself (E.g., Rev. 16:13). The idea here is Babylon is heavily demon possessed.
 - ii) Remember that Satan knows his time on earth is now limited by this point. One reason Satan organizes this final world empire is "one last ditch effort" to stop or slow down God's plans for mankind. The City of Babylon is the headquarters. It would make sense that it is a demon-heavy location.
 - iii) I've believe there is much more demonic activity in places that "lack God". Show me a city or country with little Christian influence and I'll argue that city is "demon infested". I'm convinced prayer is the great enemy of this influence.
 - c) The last phrase says, "A haunt for every unclean and detestable bird".
 - i) The word "unclean" is not about bathing. This is a Jewish term. In Leviticus Chapter 11, animals, fish, insects and birds were separated into types the Jewish people were and were not allowed to eat. The word "unclean" refers to the ones they could not eat or touch. That word "unclean" is used 23 times in Leviticus 11.
 - ii) If you look at the "unclean" birds in Leviticus, what they have in common is they are all predators and meat-eaters. These birds attack other living creatures. My point is Rev. 18:2 is not a condemnation of certain birds. It is written to the Jewish person who understands that birds are a "word picture" of demonic creatures.

7. Verse 3: For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."
- a) Let's start with the purpose of what is going on here:
 - i) An angel who is illuminated (Verse 1) and has a loud voice (Verse 2) is making this proclamation to the world. In Verse 4, we learn the message is to believers to come out of Babylon. The angel's speech goes from Verses 2 through 4.
 - b) The first sentence is, "All the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries".
 - i) We know this is not literal. People cannot get drunk from adultery.
 - ii) The word "her" in Verse 3 refers to Babylon. If you recall from Chapter 17, Babylon is compared to a female prostitute. The idea is this city, or this system "enticed" the world to follow whatever temptation(s) Babylon is offering.
 - a) In Chapter 17, the emphasis was on Babylon's religious system.
 - b) In Chapter 18, the emphasis will be on Babylon's power and wealth.
 - c) The next phrase is, "The kings of the earth committed adultery with her."
 - i) What does that mean? It means kings (presidents, dictators, etc.) grew in power by aligning themselves with Babylon. Verse 3 compares this act to adultery.
 - ii) Remember that "idolatry" and "adultery" are synonyms in the bible. In both cases, one is turning away from the one to whom we are committed.
 - iii) Whatever Babylon is, understand that 1) God is against it and 2) God sees it as a temptation to draw away from Him. It is about the temptation of power.
 - iv) It is interesting to contemplate that Revelation does not spend a lot of time describing the actual sins of Babylon. It simply describes it as a bad thing and most of the verses focus on the punishment. The question is, what is Babylon and why does God hate it so much? What it most likely refers to is rebellion against the God of Bible in every way imaginable. The idea of this verse is that kings and other leaders are tempted to turn from God in exchange for more power.
 - v) My theme of this chapter about "what it takes" to turn one away from God. Remember Satan's goal is to make us ineffective witnesses for God. One of the things Satan offers is power. Leaders are offered more power over people in exchange from turning from God.
 - vi) Why does Satan focus on such leaders? Because those leaders influence those under them. That is why it is essential for Christians to pray for those "over us" in power. Satan does focus his efforts on those in power as he knows they can then pass laws to make more Christians ineffective. (When immoral laws are past by our government, now you know the forces behind such laws!)
 - d) The last phrase is "The merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries".
 - i) If Satan can't get us with power, he goes for the wallet! Here we read of the businessmen of the world thinking, "OK, this city is rich. Let us advertise our goods on the Babylon Home Shopping Network!" ☺
 - ii) If I had to pick Satan's most effective temptation-weapon against believers it is that of "wealth". That ties back to my lesson theme of "The Danger of Stuff".
 - iii) The sin is not about earning a living. The sin is to compromise one's trust in God in order to earn a living. Babylon is an organized rebellion against the God of the bible. To "make a living" off of Babylon is just as sinful as whatever Babylon is.
 - a) The danger is that of "compromise". The idea is in order to "get rich" people compromise their morals. If I could only pass on one line from this lesson it would be, "Never compromise your principals for anyone or anything". I get the impression that this verse is about people who "sold out" their belief in order to make money off of Babylon.

8. Verse 4: Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;
- a) Verse 4 opens with "another voice". From Verses 4 to 11, this unnamed voice is speaking.
 - i) Apparently, the "illuminated angel with the loud voice" in Verses 2 and 3 is now done and has gone back to heaven.
 - ii) The text doesn't say who is this speaker is. We know it is not God the Father because this speaker refers to God in the third person in Verse 5.
 - b) Notice who this voice is speaking to: "My people". This voice is urging "My people" to get out of Babylon and not "share in her sins" and avoid her judgments.
 - i) Some suspect the speaker is Jesus Himself due to the "My People" reference. It could be an angel with a message from God.
 - ii) This verse is an indication that whenever this event takes place, it is a time when there are still believers in God on earth. God wouldn't be "wasting his time" with this proclamation unless there were still believers on earth.
 - iii) My personal view is that this message is directed toward Jewish believers. That is based on Verse 2 where it refers to "unclean" birds. Only a Jewish person would understand the reference to "unclean".
 - iv) One can speculate all day about this voice. How was it audible? How did people hear it? Was it broadcast on the news? We don't know. The point is Revelation says that some sort of audible voice got this message out, and assumedly, it reached the people God wanted it to reach.
 - v) Remember Revelation is written to believers. The "hearers" of this message are also you and me, as well as people living at that time. This is meant as a warning to Christians to avoid compromising our belief in God for the sake of money.
 - c) It's hard not to read this and think of the "Sodom and Gomorrah" story in Genesis.
 - i) In that story, Abraham raised his nephew named Lot. They were both being blessed by God and growing rich. They decided to part company as the grazing land for their animals was not big enough for both of them. Lot then picked to live in Sodom as the "land looked good". (Ref.: Gen. 13:10). In other words, Lot didn't care about the sins of Sodom. He just saw that place as "good for business".
 - ii) Like this story of Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah are judged. In both stories, we get little information as to why it is judged. We are just told in effect that Sodom has become so wicked, God says He is going to wipe it out. (Ref. Gen. 18:20).
 - iii) What is interesting is that in all the time Lot lived in Sodom, he didn't influence anyone for God. Within that story is a part where Abraham talking to God. Abraham asks God to spare Sodom if there are "righteous" people living in that city. What is implied is that there is no one "righteous" (i.e., seeking God) and Lot was not an influence on anyone. (Ref. Genesis 18:23-33).
 - iv) A key point of the Sodom and Gomorrah story is Lot lived among them, but failed to influence them. Lot became an "ineffective witness" for God living among those people. Another key point is that God could not destroy those cities until Lot was out of there. Even though "righteous Lot" was saved (Ref.: 2nd Peter 2:7), he was an ineffective witness for God. Lot was one of "God's people" living in Sodom, which was destined to be destroyed for wickedness. Here in Revelation, God is telling "His people" to get out of Babylon before God can judge it.
 - d) OK, John, all of this is interesting. What does it have to do with my life?
 - i) Think of this chapter as a warning not to be too "entangled" in the commercial world. There is nothing wrong with Christians working among nonbelievers. The danger is if our job is causing us to compromise our faith. Then we too, need to "Get out of Babylon before it is destroyed".
 - e) Meanwhile, a voice in heaven is still condemning this place. ☺

9. Verse 5: for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.
 - a) Remember there is an angel "predicting" the fall of Babylon. It is being described as if it has already happened and is a done deal.
 - b) As I stated in the last lesson, Babylon the literal city is the same location as the "Tower of Babel" from Genesis 11. That tower was on the "Plain of Shinar" (Genesis 11:2), which is the flat terrain where the City of Babylon was built.
 - i) In the Tower of Babel story, the idea was to build a tower that "reaches to heaven". (Genesis 11:4) The implication was to build a place where man can get organized without God.
 - ii) My point of all of this is an angel says in Verse 5, "Her sins are piled up to heaven".
 - a) I believe it is an intentional pun as to compare it to the tower of Babel.
 - c) The idea is God is patient, but there is a limit to God's patience before judging sin.
 - i) When it says, "God has remembered her crimes", it is not as if God has memory recall issues. ☺ God did not say, "Oh, yeah, I've got to go deal with Babylon!"
 - ii) The idea is to read this from our perspective. It appears as if Babylon is getting away with this sin. The actual destruction event has not happened yet. The idea of "God remembering" is a poetic way of saying the time has come for judgment.
10. Verse 6: Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.
 - a) In the Book of Exodus, when someone was guilty of stealing, the punishment was the criminal had to pay back double what he stole. (Ref: Exodus 22:4, 7 and 9). I believe the same idea is applied here. The idea is if one is making a living or growing in power off a godless system like Babylon, God views it as "stealing" time from Him.
 - b) Even if I'm wrong on the Jewish "payback double" theory, you can tell God's not too crazy about the idea of making a living off of Babylon. ☺ The important point again is to beware of compromising one's faith for the sake of power and/or money.
 - c) The last phrase, "Mix her a double portion from her own cup" is similar in its meaning.
 - i) The term "cup" is associated with a king in power in the ancient Middle East. Some kings had their own special cup. (E.g., See Genesis 40:11). When the text says, "mix her a double portion from her own cup", it is a poetic way of saying to return "double" the amount taken from the king's cup. The "cup" refers to the power associated with Babylon.
11. Verse 7a: Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself.
 - a) Remember this verse is addressed to believers. The idea is for believers living during this time to get out of Babylon and not be dependant upon its power and wealth.
 - b) When the text says, "give her as much torture and grief", I don't believe it means God wants believers to go out and torture government officials in Babylon. ☺ That would be contradictory to Jesus' principal of "Love Your Enemies" (Ref. Matthew 5:44).
 - i) I think the idea is to "go in the opposite direction as what Babylon offers".
 - ii) Let me give some examples: If the only way to make a living in a town is to deny God, it is time to move to another town. If your job requires you to do something immoral or won't permit you to go to church at all, it's time to get another job.
 - iii) The idea of "torture and grief" is to get as far away from this Babylonian system as possible. The "grief" may be to oneself as giving up luxury or power for the sake of God can be difficult.
 - c) Remember what was written about Moses in a similar situation: "By faith Moses...chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26 NIV).

12. Verse 7b: In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'
- a) In the second half of this verse, we switch our focus.
 - i) The first half (Verse 7a) of this verse was written to believers to get out of Babylon.
 - ii) The second half of this verse (Verse 7b) is written about Babylon and its pride.
 - b) Let me paraphrase the leaders of Babylon here: "I can now kick back and enjoy the good life. All the major kings of the world have joined the empire. I have plenty of money. I can live a happy life from here on in." That in effect, is the "boasting" of this text.
 - c) Remember the city of Babylon is compared to a woman.
 - i) Therefore the false sense of confidence that says, "I sit as a queen".
 - ii) In the Middle East culture of that day, to be a widow is usually to be poor, without a husband to depend upon. When the text says, "I am not a widow", it is a way of saying I will never be poor.
 - d) Jesus Himself "chimed in" on this issue in a parable:
 - i) There is a parable (i.e., a made-up story) in Luke 12 about a guy who said in effect, "I'm rich. I have so much stuff, I have nowhere to put it. I know! I'll increase my storage space and then I'm set for years." (Paraphrase of Luke 12:16-19).
 - ii) Then the punch line is Jesus said, that night, this guy was "scheduled" to die.
 - iii) The final line is, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21, NIV)
 - iv) Remember the point of all of this is not to take a vow of poverty. The point is that if one's all consuming passion is getting wealthy, it becomes their "god". It is a form of idolatry.
13. Verse 8: Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.
- a) Let's remember what is going on here: There is a voice from heaven, presumably an angel, describing the future destruction of Babylon as if it has already happened.
 - b) One gets the idea "one day" things are fine in Babylon. Trade is going well. The leaders are financially successful. The Babylon Stock Exchange is having a record year. ☺
 - i) Then "the next day", it comes to an end. Maybe it is burned, bombed or whatever. It goes from successful to judgment in a really short time span.
 - ii) This is a city that boasted in her wealth. One of the things noted after this "disaster" occurs is famine. The point is things change in a moment in time.
 - c) That's the problem with wealth. It's nice to have it, but one never knows what will happen "tomorrow". I've always looked at money as a tool to accomplish things. It can be used for good or evil. The bible never called money evil. It states the love of money is the root of all evil. (Ref.: 1st Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5).
 - d) Ezekiel made this statement once: "They will throw their silver into the streets and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD; They will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity." (Ezekiel 7:19 NIV)
 - i) What's the point? When judgment comes, you can't buy your way out of it. Whenever this judgment of Babylon occurs, all the money they have is useless.
 - e) What is to be learned from this lesson is for us to have the right perspective about money. We are to be grateful for the finances God provides. We are to work hard to make a living. At the same time, we need to put wealth in perspective and not put any trust in it when it comes to our salvation.
 - i) At the same time, it is important that God provides us with financial resources for a reason. There may be a time in your or my future where we need that savings to get us through a rough time. In such times, be grateful God provided for us. My point here is we are not to be wasteful of our financial resources just because we "can't take it with us".

- f) A classic line among pastors goes, "It is a lie that you can't take money with you to heaven. The truth is you can. The secret is you send it up ahead of time".
 - i) What is meant by that is if one uses part of their financial resources for God's ministry, it is building up one's rewards toward heaven.
 - g) Meanwhile, Babylon is still toast and Revelation is still describing the event. ☺
14. Verse 9: "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. ¹⁰ Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: " `Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!"
- a) Verses 9-11 describe the kings of the earth mourning over the fall of Babylon.
 - i) These two verses mourn the fall of Babylon's power.
 - ii) The mourning over the loss of wealth is coming up, starting in Verse 12. In those verses, the merchants of the world are mourning over the fall of Babylon.
 - a) I notice a lot more verses are mourning the loss of wealth. I wonder if the loss of money is a more common issue than the loss of power.
 - iii) Meanwhile, let's talk about these kings who lost power.
 - b) Here in these two verses, are describing kings who lost their power. The point is they are watching the destruction of Babylon on their television sets (my interpretation) and are mourning over Babylon's fall.
 - c) My personal view is that they are not mourning the loss of Babylon so much as they are mourning the loss of their power.
 - i) Verse 10 says these kings are "terrified at her torment". My personal view is that they are thinking, "Oh boy, God just zapped this city and we were dependant upon that city. We bet on the wrong horse. I suspect we kings are next!"
 - d) Most of this lesson focuses on the danger of material wealth, as most of the verses in this chapter focus on that topic. Still, there are some verses that focus on power.
 - i) Like wealth, there is nothing wrong with "power" (e.g., a government leadership) role all unto itself. The danger is if that power compromises one's faith in God.
 - ii) When you read through the New Testament, there are subtle references to Christians who had government jobs in the Roman Empire. Those Christians were never condemned for their jobs. The point is they never compromised their faith despite working for a government that outlawed Christianity. The issue is not one's "job" in an immoral government. The issue is letting the power of one's job corrupt one's faith in God.
 - iii) Understand that God will judge immoral governments. The key is not to be part of that judgment because one depended upon that government in terms of trusting that government over God.
 - a) An example of comprise due to power might be, "Why should I care about going to church? I'm a powerful member of this administration. I'm set for life. I'll worry about the next life in the next life."
 - e) A point of these two verses is one never knows when one's power will end. Just as money can come and go in "one day", so can one's power. One can be grateful to God for the leadership role that has been appointed to you, but one still needs to be dependant upon God and not the power itself. That is the lesson to be learned from these verses.
 - f) Meanwhile, it's now the businessmen's turn to start wailing. ☺
15. Verse 11: "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more-- ¹² 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; ¹³ 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 bodies and souls of men.

- a) The first thing to catch from this is why the merchants are mourning:
 - i) They are not mourning because Babylon has been destroyed.
 - ii) They are not mourning that their own souls are now in danger.
 - iii) They are mourning that no one is buying their stuff! (Verse 10).
 - iv) It is as if they are watching Babylon going up on smoke on the evening news and they're thinking, "I went to all this time and trouble to manufacture this stuff and now the buyers are gone. They're goes my profit!" You almost get the impression that if there were a "Babylon 2" somewhere else in the world, these guys would shrug their shoulders and set sail for this other city to sell their stuff.
 - v) What I suspect is the problem of these merchants is they need to sell something to somebody as that is what they live for. Who cares if Babylon is immoral? So what if they kill Christians? Babylon pays top dollar for our product and that is all that matters. My not so subtle point here is again, about compromising one's belief in God for the sake of a profit.
 - b) Next, let's talk about the products themselves. There is not much this list in Verses 11-13 has in common. There is jewelry, fine garments, hand crafted building materials, costly spices and the livestock. There is also the "souls of men", which I'll get to shortly.
 - i) What is to be noticed about these items is they all appear to be "luxuries". In other words, none of these items are required for survival. They are all luxury items due to the spoils of being in power.
 - ii) You get the impression that this antichrist-lead-empire thrived on world trade. It is seducing to people making products to sell to this system as there are buyers.
 - iii) One gets the impression that free market capitalism is alive and well in this system. My point is that capitalism is neither bad nor good. Like money, it can be used either way.
 - c) Finally, the last product on the list is "the bodies and souls" of men.
 - i) This could refer to slavery. It could refer to prostitution. Both of those are still alive and well on this planet and could exist in this Great Tribulation.
 - ii) Notice the word "souls". This is the only product on the list that cannot be purchased with money. What I suspect "soul" means is people turn their back on God due to the temptation of the Babylonian system. In that sense, merchants offer the "souls" of people.
16. Verse 14: "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.'¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn¹⁶ and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!¹⁷ In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!"
- a) First, notice the second word is "will". If you read all of these judgment verses about merchants crying over Babylon's fall, you will notice it is in future tense.
 - i) My point is the event itself has not happened yet. In fact, the event itself is never described. We are reading predictions as if it is definitely going to happen.
 - b) These verses continue to emphasize the same theme: The merchants are complaining not so much that Babylon is destroyed, but because they can't do business with it anymore.
 - i) Notice Verse 14 says, "The fruit you longed for is gone from you." These merchants longed for the profits from Babylon. They longed to have luxurious stuff like the executives in Babylon.
 - ii) Does this mean owning a luxury item is a sin? Again, no. The key is perspective. If one had to give up that item for "God's sake", can one do it? The question to ponder is whether or not that item compromises our relationship with God.

- c) If you read Verses 16-17, the merchants are crying over Babylon's fall.
 - i) It is interesting to read what is not said. You don't read, "I will miss my buddies who died in this tragedy". Instead, the emphasis is on the luxurious items the Babylonians owned and how the merchant's miss "those" things!
 - ii) I read an interesting illustration in Donald Barnhouse's commentary on Revelation. He believes in hell, the souls of people will still have their sinful desires, but they will be unfulfilled. He uses the illustration of hell having a beautiful golf course, but there are no golf balls, so no one can play. The point is people in hell will still long for their sinful desires, but they can't have them. Here in Revelation, we read of merchants "suffering", not because of their friends dying, but because they can't have the luxury items they want to buy and sell.
17. Verse 17b: "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ¹⁸ When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' ¹⁹ They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: " '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!
- a) What is interesting to contemplate about these verses is the merchants are watching the destruction of Babylon. I sort of see it as the City of Babylon is on fire, and the merchants are watching it on television or their computer monitors.
 - i) For centuries, scholars have debated whether or not Babylon refers to the ancient city of Babylon, or Rome or some other city. An interesting point is neither Rome nor Babylon are port cities. People have wondered how merchants could watch Babylon's destruction from their ships. With today's technology, it is not an issue. Most large cargo ships have satellites and get computer and television access.
 - b) These verses continue the mourning of the sea merchants about the fall of Babylon.
 - c) Notice the lack of any repentance in these verses:
 - i) There is no, "Oh boy, if God zapped this city, maybe we should turn to Him!"
 - ii) These merchants "stand back" from Babylon in order to save their own lives, but there is no sense that they desire to change their lifestyle. This is another reminder that suffering is not enough to get the unrepentant to turn to God. In order for one to turn to God, His grace has to come in our lives. For the Christian, suffering draws us closer. For the nonbeliever, judgment only takes away their ability to fulfill their sinful desires.
 - d) The only "technical note" to explain about these verses is "throwing dust on their heads". This is an ancient Middle East sign of remorse. The same way Americans wear black when going to a funeral is similar to this concept. One can find a handful of references to this practice in the bible.
 - e) This is the end of the "merchants suffering over Babylon's loss" section. While it is interesting to read about this literal event to happen one day, the important thing is to understand the application to our lives: These merchants were willing to make a profit off a city that killed Christians. (Ref.: 17:6, 18:24). Whatever Babylon is, God calls it a prostitute. (Ref.: 17:1, 15, 16). The point to Christians is the danger of compromising our faith for the temporary reward of material wealth.
18. Verse 20: Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.' "
- a) Here's the verse I've been waiting for the whole lesson. Time to pay attention. ☺
 - b) The word "rejoice" is a key word of this lesson. In the original Greek, it is a command.
 - i) The word "rejoice" means to have joy and to praise God with one's joy. The Hebrew word translated "joy" means to jump up and down with excitement.

- c) The word "rejoice" is only used four times in Revelation:
 - i) The first time is when nonbelievers rejoiced over the God's "two witnesses" being killed back in Chapter 11 (Ref. Revelation 11:10).
 - ii) The second time is when Satan was kicked out of heaven. The residents of heaven rejoiced over the fact Satan was kicked out. (Ref. Revelation 12:12).
 - iii) The third time is here in Verse 20. I'll discuss it more in a moment.
 - iv) The final time in Chapter 19 over the "marriage of the Lamb (Jesus)". We will get to that in the next lesson.
- d) Here is what I want you to notice about the word "rejoice" here in Chapter 18:
 - i) Revelation never tells us to rejoice over our salvation, although it's not a bad thing.
 - ii) Revelation never tells us to rejoice our Jesus return. Again, it's not a bad thing.
 - iii) Revelation never told us to rejoice over the earth's judgment in the previous chapters.
 - iv) The thing Christians are told to rejoice over is the destruction of Babylon.
- e) If Babylon is judged, people are sent to hell for eternity. Shouldn't we feel some sense of sorrow over this? Why should we be rejoicing over its destruction?
 - i) Let's go back to the verse: The final sentence says, "God has judged her (Babylon) for the way she treated you." We are to rejoice over the justice to be fulfilled.
 - ii) Does this refer to revenge for the martyrs who were killed? Yes. While we may mourn over those being sent to hell, we tend to forget that the sins they committed harmed others who were believers.
 - iii) In the bigger picture, the idea is we are to rejoice over the judgment of those who oppose God. If we love God, then we have to be opposed to those who oppose God. In other words, the enemy of those I love is also my enemy!" If somebody hurts my wife or my children, I would want to hurt them as I love them. If we love God, then we should rejoice when those who are God's enemies be judged.
 - a) But shouldn't we have love for all people? What about when Jesus said, "Love your enemies"? Notice God is doing the judging, not us. God never says to take matters into our own hands. (Putting criminals in jail is a separate issue. I'm talking about taking God's role of eternal judgment and putting it in our hands.)
 - b) The point is, while we are alive, we rarely know who is being sent to heaven or hell. One day, we will know it and just as much as we should rejoice over our salvation, we rejoice over God's judgment of people being "right and true".
- f) Let me put this verse in another perspective: God loves us too much to leave us alone.
 - i) If God loves us, then He wants to protect us from those who do us harm. Grant it, millions have been called to be martyrs for their faith in Jesus. At the same time, know there is coming a day of eternal judgment for those who do them harm.
 - ii) It is one thing to think of Babylon as being judged for killing Christians. It is one thing to think of Babylon as being judged for say, opposing God. What I want you to think about is Babylon is also being judged for "tempting" believers!
 - a) Back in Verse 4, God said, "Come out of her my people". In Chapter 18, believers in God are tempted by Babylon's power and wealth. Part of the reason this city is judged is to remove that temptation. Again, God loves us too much to leave us alone. He judges what is harmful and tempting to our lives!
 - iii) Again, notice the text spends a lot more time dealing with the judgment over material things than it does over the "kings" who were mourning. The danger of compromise over material things is probably Satan's greatest weapon to make us ineffective witnesses for God.

19. Verse 21: Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.
- a) The first thing to notice is that a boulder was not dropped on Babylon, but in the sea. In other words, this verse is not describing the literal destruction of Babylon, but is a "visual demonstration prophecy" describing the fall of Babylon.
 - i) When you read the Old Testament prophets, you will often read of them doing some sort of visual example of their predictions. We have that here as well.
 - b) The previous verse, Verse 20, was a "break" from describing the future judgment of Babylon. The text gave us a one-line break telling Christians to rejoice. Here in Verse 21, we are now back to predicting its destruction.
 - c) Notice the time and effort God is going through in order to warn people about its inevitable destruction. If you think God is being cruel by judging this city and destroying its inhabitants, look how much time and trouble God is going through to warn people about what is to happen.
 - i) In a bigger picture, God does the same with all of mankind. We all suffer from the incurable disease of "sin" and through the Bible, God is warning mankind of its inevitable doom due to that sin. If one thinks God is cruel for judging the world, look at the time, trouble and cost God went through to provide a solution!
 - d) Getting back to the verse, the point the angel is making is that when the destruction of Babylon comes, it will be quick and it will be complete.
 - i) Christians often wonder, "Lord, why are you making me suffer? What about those nonbelievers over there who did this? Why aren't they suffering?" The answer is Christians only suffer for a "moment". They suffer for eternity. This verse is a reminder that judgment does come one day. We may not see that day, but God does. When it does come, it will be relatively quick and complete.
20. Verse 22: The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. ²³ The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.
- a) In Verse 21, an angel picked up a big rock and threw it in the sea as a demonstration to the world of what will happen to Babylon.
 - b) In Verses 22-24, that same angel is still speaking.
 - c) When you read Verses 22-23, Babylon had all the signs of a "successful" city:
 - i) People who are rich and successful have spare time for entertainment.
 - ii) Verse 22 mentions musicians that played in Babylon.
 - iii) Babylon had plenty of "blue collar" workers. An example is the millstone worker reference in Verse 22.
 - iv) Verse 23 implies the city has utilities. That's my interpretation of "lamp shining". In other words, it had light, via power. The city had a good utility infrastructure.
 - v) Babylon had people getting married as mentioned in Verse 23.
 - vi) Babylon 's merchants were powerful businessman, and world renown (Verse 23).
 - d) Here's the point: None of these things are wrong unto themselves. There is nothing wrong with any of these professions or getting married. The idea is "life was normal" in Babylon when the judgment came. Jesus once said in effect that "life was normal" before the flood came in Noah's day. (Ref. Matthew 24:38-39, Luke 17:27). In those verses, Jesus also states that "life will be normal" until this whole judgment period begins.
 - e) The key line is the last sentence: "By your magic spell all the nations were led astray".

- i) In other words, the temptation to have these "things" drew people away from God. Again, there is nothing wrong with music (entertainment), working, wealth or marriage ceremonies. The point is people compromised their faith in God in order to a part of this Babylonian society. That was the demonic temptation.
- 21. Verse 24: In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."
 - a) Here is the final line of the angels' prophecy and the final verse of this chapter.
 - b) I don't believe it means that all Christians who died as martyrs died within the city boundaries of Babylon. The point is Babylon, in all it represented was responsible for Christian martyrs. Whatever Babylon is (a city, an empire, etc.), it opposed God, and murdered believers. People turned a blind eye to this fact in order to grow wealthy and have power. That is the sad reality of "Babylon".
 - c) Let's try a modern example: Pick a country on earth where Christianity is illegal and people are being put to death for believing in Jesus. Should Christians boycott their products? Should we go to war with that country?
 - i) Think of it this way: Paul lived in the Roman Empire. They were guilty of persecuting Christians. You don't read of Paul ever condemning the Romans although I'm sure he would stop it if he could. Paul had "bigger fish to fry". He was more concerned with people's salvation than he was with righting the wrongs of government power.
 - ii) That should be the Christians attitude as well. We can do all we can to witness to the lost souls of countries that persecute believers. We pray for such people. We tell them of the judgment to come and God's salvation plan. If our government can successfully pressure their government into freedom of religion, we should support that. If a Christian(s) can use their power to stop evil, then by all means they should do so.
 - iii) The point of this lesson is about the danger of compromising our belief in God for the sake of power or the sake of material wealth. If we work for a system that turns a "blind eye" to sin, we too, will turn a blind eye to such sin in exchange for money and power. That is the temptation-danger of a "Babylon".
 - iv) When it comes to actually "doing something", I find God leads us down the right path. If there is something we can do to say, change jobs or change a country, God puts it on our hearts what is the right thing to do. This is a tough lesson as it hits all of us (myself included) in the pocketbook. Remember our goal is to be effective witnesses for God. Our God loves us too much to let "stumbling blocks" get in our way and wants to help us to overcome issues that can make us ineffective witnesses for Him. Instead of worrying about this, let's pray.
- 22. Father, Our goal in life is to do Your will in all that we do. Each of us are susceptible to Satan's temptations. First, we pray for strength against temptation. We know that Your power is greater than anything the world or demonic power can throw at us. Next, help us to be effective witnesses for You. Show us areas of our life in which we are compromising our faith in You. Give us the boldness and the discernment to do Your will in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.