

The SCROLL
of REVELATION
given to the
Apostle JOHN

explained by
a servant of God

PART NINE:
Babylon Judged,
Jesus Returns

(18:1-19:21)
February, 2003

Close Up
The Fall of Babylon
18:1-19:10

What begins in **18:1** is a **separate vision** from chapter 17, but **not a separate subject**. Another angel is used. In this chapter there is no imagery, only facts. The fact of Babylon's fall, the fact of those who mourn her. The announcement is made by an angel of great authority. May I suggest that this could be the great archangel spoken of by the apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 4:16? In connection with Paul's description of His coming, a full account of which immediately follows in 19:11-16, there is the "voice of the archangel." The message of that Voice only lasts through verse 3. Then another voice reminds people of God *of all generations* to stay clear of Babylon. Now that same destruction, seemingly already past in verses 1-3, is back to the future in most of the rest of the chapter.

In **18:2** the angel says what we heard in 14:8 and 16:19. Consider the echoing of the phrase "**is fallen.**" The original, in Isaiah 21:9, is the same. Babylon *is fallen, is fallen*. Could it be that this double announcement is to lead us to believe that there are *two* Babylons? There was that original city, now in ruins, yet never destroyed as God had promised, with violent suddenness. Then there is Babylon on the Tiber, according to chapter 17. Rome, and the kingdom centered there. Are they both to fall at this time? Of course Babylon would have to be rebuilt. Has not Saddam been working on that? Is the war against Iraq going to cause Iraq's expansion, and a new day for her?

It seems odd to hear in the 90's AD a prophecy about **a city that was supposed to have been finished centuries before**. Here is a mystery indeed for believers to continue to investigate. Wrestle with God until every syllable of every text involved is crystal clear. It is not good enough to have *most* of the mystery resolved. There are answers for every riddle. I believe those who want to know these things will know them more and more as the Day draws near.

A continuing description of **Babylon's destruction**, as the chapter progresses, sometimes matches *word for word* the picture painted by Isaiah of the original city in Isaiah 13, 14, 34. Read them and see for yourself! One significant difference in the angel's words, however, is the addition of demon spirits to the mix. This coming horror is not just a human tragedy. Babylon will be Satan's masterpiece. It will now bear Satan's mark. It will be on earth the gathering place of all that is evil, a veritable prison holding the enemy captive until its new home, the Lake of fire, is prepared to receive him.

18:3 takes us back to 17:2, and explains to us how the evil centered in Rome/Babylon has infected, as with a deadly virus, all the nations.

Another voice (18:4). Back from the future, and into the present again. People of God! **Come out of her!** As the prophet Isaiah warned (48:20, 51:45, 52:11), and as the apostle Paul echoed, also using Isaiah (II Corinthians 6:17). Notice that Paul's quote from Isaiah is not exact. He is speaking as the Spirit gives him utterance here. He says, Do not even *touch* what is unclean. Distance yourself from this world except where absolutely necessary!

18:5 continues the **rationale for separation** from the evil of this world. The cup of iniquity is full. It is time for judgment. Don't be anywhere near that which God hates so much.

The request for judgment (18:6-7). The announcement has already been made. The innocent are being asked to step aside, so that judgment can fall. Though it seems that believers

themselves are being told to to the judging of Babylon, looking at the end of verse 8 lets us know that it is God who does this, and in 17:16 we find His servants for this destruction: the antichrist Kingdom itself throws Babylon off and tramples her. Jesus, though He is very near at this point, has not yet come and rendered direct judgment. He is using forces of nature and forces of war.

Here in verses 6 and 7 we get **more insights into who this “woman” is**. Her demeanor is that of a proud queen that cannot be removed from the Throne. She believes she is God’s representative on earth and therefore deserves every luxury and every privilege. How mistaken she is. God’s true representatives on earth are like Jesus, and the mind that is in them inevitably leads them to wash disciples’ feet and die on a cross. Let us beware the evil of our hearts that wants to think in terms of “deserving” blessings. Let us always approach the Throne of Mercy as humble subjects of the King, knowing we **are** friends of the Court, but knowing also how undeserving is that friendship.

Note the **quickness of the judgment to come (18:8)**: In 8, “...her plagues will come in *one day*.” In 10, “...in *one hour* your judgment has come.” In 17, “...in *one hour* such great riches came to nothing.” In 19, “...in *one hour* she is made desolate.” Sounds very much like the instant end of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or even much worse. One day Babylon flourishes. The next she is gone.

Then begins the pitiful lament, **the funeral song** by the great men of earth for the “great city” of Babylon (**18:9**). These world leaders obviously have no part in her destruction, as this is a work of the “ten horns.” This separation of powers is one clue that the ten-district theory of end time government will not hold. Why would world powers mourn Babylon’s fall if they all were responsible for it? Better the “United States of Europe”, a confederation of ten states located roughly in the territory once called the Roman Empire. However the worldwide connection to the beast and the harlot becomes obvious here. When she is gone, their own status is ruined. She was the supplier as well as the recipient of their goods, the supreme trading city of earth.

Before we continue we must take a look at this **New Testament Babylon**, the city of **Rome, today**. She does not seem to be all that powerful now. Here at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in fact, where is there anywhere, except America, a metropolis that fits the words of Revelation 18, soon to follow in our reading? We are looking for an unequaled center of trade (**18:11-20**), a center of music, commerce, religion, military might (**18:21-24**). One can imagine why some have thought that **Babylon is really America today!** Elements of Babylon are certainly in this country. But we are looking for a *city* that meets the description. New York? Washington? Los Angeles?

If we look at our world and do not see what the Bible says, **let us be careful not to invent something for God**. The Bible still mentions only one candidate, in two forms, for this final city. The city must be *Babylon* or that which became “Babylon” in the eyes of the Revelator of this book, the city of Rome. If neither of those candidates match up today, we need to give them time to blossom. God’s Word cannot be inaccurate. I believe that either one or both of those cities will ultimately rise to fulfill their place in history.

Now, **can Rome rise again?** When the Pope is able to convince all religions to come together, Rome can rise. When the Pope can persuade the people of Jerusalem that he indeed is the one who can successfully solve the Middle east conflict through internationalizing Jerusa-

lem, Rome can rise. When the nations of earth look for a return to the glory years, and financial prosperity, in the United States of Europe, Rome can rise. It was at the *treaty of Rome*, in 1957, that Europe began its rise. That cannot be a coincidence.

A curious insight is related in **18:10-11: The kings of the earth all seem to be near** while Babylon is being destroyed, but they deliberately “stand at a distance.” Is this because the sixth-bowl demons (16:14) have gathered them in one place for the coming battle against God Almighty? It would seem so. This is, after all, the last of the last days. Antichrist is furiously releasing every evil force at his command and has just “dropped the bomb” on Babylon. In verse 15 the earth’s merchants, many of them on hand to trade, also have to step back.

“**Alas**”, an expression of sorrowful shock, is used only in this chapter of the New Testament. Even sin-minded plague-devastated humans will be shocked when they see Babylon fall.

A catalog of the merchandise about to be lost to the world system (18:12-14) Strange creatures, these humans. The sun has been darkened. Millions of people are dead all over the earth. Nature and human nature are at their worst, and yet their greedy souls are concerned more about the money they will lose on things than that the world is falling apart. Come to think of it, that is not far from the description of our own world. The love of money drives the hearts of men in the face of world catastrophes even now.

Here is **the list of grieved merchandise** in the categories given:

- (1) gold, silver, precious stones, pearls,
- (2) fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet,
- (3) types of wood, ivory, bronze, iron, marble,
- (4) cinnamon, incense, fragrant oil, frankincense,
- (5) wine, oil, flour, wheat, fruit,
- (6) cattle, sheep, horses/chariots,
- (7) the bodies and souls of men! (slavery?),
- (8) “rich and splendid things” covers all else.

This is a **list of products** to be found in the final capital of the world. How stands that description at this hour? Rome must surely rise again. What about now? Is she a major trading city today? Is slavery there, other than the spiritual bondage for which she is famous? The word of God, **every word, is pure**. When this city exists, it will be obvious.

18:15 echoes verse 10, but speaks of *merchants* instead of *world leaders*. The same pattern for *naval personnel* is found in **18:17**. **18:16** brings us back to 17:4 and reminds us that indeed, chapters 17 and 18 speak of the same place.

The funeral song neatly divides into **three portions**. The *kings* of the earth, **18:9-10**, the *merchants* in **18:11-17a**, and the *navy* in **18:17b, 18-19**. Political, financial, and military grief. Babylon is gone. Notice the similarity of their songs: They all start out “Alas, alas that great city...,” and then they add their own personal perspective of the description of that place. Following this it is, “for in one hour...” God has destroyed her, and the city has come to desolate nothingness.

Heaven responds with **three categories of worshipers**, rejoicing in the moment (**18:20-21**)! The holy apostles, the prophets, the angels of heaven. **There is no sorrow**. For the *happiness of man* was never the purpose of Heaven. Rather, the *glory of God*! God has gotten glory from this vengeance. Let no voice of sympathy for those “poor humans” be voiced! Mercy is now being expressed in new ways: A merciful God has rid the earth of this cancer that once

poisoned all it contacted. Earth is being purified, God is being glorified. So be it!

The angel's pronouncement (18:21). And is this any different from what the Old Testament writers saw of "Babylon" ? Did they see some *gradual falling away* of the city? Jeremiah 51:8 : "Babylon has **suddenly** fallen and been destroyed." More to the point, the finality and speed of Babylon's fall are explicitly demonstrated by the command of Jeremiah to Seraiah the "quartermaster" (Jeremiah 51:59-64) to take his book of prophecy about Babylon, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the Euphrates River. This was to be the sign that Babylon would not recover from its tragedy.

But Babylon only **slowly drifted away** from prominence, being for scores of years after its takeover a coveted jewel of world conquerors. As John wrote these words on Babylon, a strong Jewish community lived there!

Babylon's fate seems to be yet future as Revelation 18:21 points out again: Here **Jeremiah's picture is revived**. This time it is not the "quartermaster" but a master angel who picks up a stone and throws it. The "sea" is the recipient now (and there is no sea around old Babylon!) but the message is the same: Babylon is to be thrown down once and for all and never be found again!

Time and nature eventually took ancient Babylon from power. But this was not God's final plan. **The spirit ruling old Babylon entered the city and governance of Rome**, raising it to prominence among the earth's billions, and thus making her ripe for judgment as though she were indeed Babylon! This will not be a repeat performance, for the original sentence was never carried out. This will be the first and last time. Yes, when all that is Babylon is scheduled for judgment, that judgment will be swift and sure, "for strong is the Lord God Who judges her" (18:8).

Next comes yet another list, this time of things **which shall never be in this city again (18:22-23)**: all manner of musicians, craftsmen of every sort, light, weddings and all of human life. It is finished.

Perhaps the most fascinating statement of all is saved until the end of the chapter (18:24): The blood of prophets (God's *spokesmen*), saints (all of God's *people*), and **all of earth's slain** too, is somehow tied to this city of Babylon. **Back to Jeremiah 51 for light** on this. 51:49: "As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon the slain of *all the earth* shall fall..." God never forgot what Babylon did to His people. That same spirit of Babylon entered Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Romanism and kept hurting God's people and God's spokesmen. Always the descendants of Nimrod have hated God's men and even caused all the other problems of earth. Everything Babylon has done is now being judged in one fell swoop, one mighty moment of power and destruction and vengeance.

Perhaps it is permissible to think of it this way: When God spoke to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, he was really speaking to Satan, His enemy. And when God spoke to old Babylon about judgment, perhaps it is **possible He was speaking to the spirit of that city**, personified in Revelation as a Harlot. He knew that evil personage inside the city would regroup and eventually form a Babylon greater and more powerful than the first. That city would then be destroyed as Babylon the first never was.

The response to Babylon's fall is continued in chapter 19, where (19:1-3) the multitudes of Heaven including the 24 elders and living creatures (19:4) we met at the beginning of the story, shed not one tear for the world-corrupting prostitute. The lady who had the reins of

the beast for all these centuries is down and out (19:2). Yet her people will never be “extinct” (19:3) as we are reminded again here of the eternity of God’s judgment. Now remains only the beast himself, seemingly running wildly out of control, but his day is soon to arrive .

In 19:5, an angel, we assume, commands worship to the Lord, reminding us that the eternal focus of Heaven and Heaven’s would-be citizens is to be the Lord God Himself, not even His justice. 19:6 is the response of the multitude of verse one to the angel’s orders.

The announcement of the Marriage Supper (19:7-10). In verse 7 is the **book’s first mention of a Marriage Supper**. No, it did not already happen somewhere three and a half or seven years ago. No, it was not a *secret* banquet, hidden from “Tribulation saints” because of their lukewarmness. Where did we get these ideas? The banquet is here initially announced, and it looks as though it will take place in the immediate future. But first things first. There will be another less tantalizing supper before it. Just for the record, the actual celebration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb itself is *nowhere recorded in Scripture*.

Here once more is a demonstration of the **indefensibility of a “pre-tribulation” rapture** during which believers are feasting around a table with Jesus while some lower-life “tribulation saints” bear horrible burdens. I think it is clear by this time in the story that the *tribulation is past*. Babylon is fallen. Heaven is rejoicing. Now let’s celebrate with the church, says the Lord! By the way, that celebration will be on earth! Jesus promised the same to His followers. Matthew 26:26 ff relates the institution of the memorial supper, to be celebrated for the duration of the church age. What strange things have been done with what could not be simpler to understand: take some bread, take some wine, let them symbolize what I did for you, so you won’t forget it! And Jesus lets us know in this original statement that, not only is this a memorial of what He did, but a preview of what is coming. Yes, there is a spiritual wine, a spiritual fellowship, a spiritual table, in this Spirit-filled age of ours. But I am speaking as I believe Jesus was, of a literal fulfillment of this prophecy. The angel is here summoning all to a *feast*. **Jesus the man** will actually return and eat and drink *real food*, as he did once before in His resurrected Body. This will be “when the Kingdom of God comes,” Luke 22:18. Jesus even told a story about a wedding feast (Matthew 22). He implied there that fathers giving banquets for their about-to-be-married sons is the norm. It is not mere allegory that calls us the Bride of Christ. That is how he views us and that is how He will receive us on that day. Our union will be celebrated before the entire world!

Notice (19:8) that this bride is **dressed in “fine linen,”** and that this clothing is said to represent the righteousness of the saints. There will be real clothing but the thing represented is even more important: the fact that Christ has given us of His righteousness and caused us to be righteous like Him. God had promised (Romans 8:29) to conform us to the image of His Son, and now it is accomplished.

In the next scene (19:14) of this drama, this same **linen-clothed multitude** is sitting atop white horses, prepared to invade earth. As always they have no fear of dirtying or “mussing” their garments, for the Lord God Who is strong to save and to judge will be doing all the work, and cutting a path through the heavens and the horrors of earth, directly to the Holy City and the Place where the Banquet Hall will soon be prepared.

Why does John fall to worship (19:9-10)? The “he” of verse 9 is either one of the 24 elders or, more likely, an angel. He is a “fellow-servant” of John. He, like John, serves the Lord God. He has the testimony of Jesus, and so does John, as John himself witnessed in his letter. (I

John 5:10) . In 22:9 a clearly-defined angel describes himself in the same way to the apostle, just after John –again– tries to worship him! The citizens of that land have so much of the brightness and glory of Jesus in them that, for an un-changed earthling, they must all seem like gods! Within a few years, John himself will wear that glory!

So this angel, who has called him to write (19:9), thus consistently being the dictator of Christ’s message (1:1), **stops John’s attempts** cold, then gives us a thought worth pondering, worth applying to our own lives lest we fall into a similar problem. *Too often we enter into hero-worship*, or even delude ourselves into thinking there is something intrinsically wonderful about our own person, when God begins to use us . Oh we have the message of the Lord flowing through us, the “testimony of Jesus.” But remember the angel’s word: Worship God! Don’t look at me! The message of Jesus that we are proclaiming is the very essence of the prophecy you are hearing at our lips. But, the source of it all is God. Worship Him! In ourselves we do nothing, know nothing. God is all, and is in all.

The return of Jesus and defeat of the Beast (19:11-21, 14:14-20)

John relates **three pictures of the coming of Jesus** . We saw two in chapter 14. The picture here is of an invading army, with Jesus at the head of it. He has gathered His troops together, and on the day of battle He is the hands-down favorite. It’s all over in a short time.

No other passages in Revelation even come near to describing an actual return of Jesus Christ. There is no hint of a “secret” coming, and no need of one! The Marriage Supper is *announced*, Jesus leaves Heaven accompanied by the saints and comes to earth conquering all who stand in His path. Zechariah sees the same thing. Jesus talks about it. Paul and Peter see it. And, from the beginning of this final book, there have been constant **hints about the return of Christ:**

1:7, “Behold **He is coming** with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him...”

1:8, “...the Lord... **Who is to come**”

2:25, “Hold fast what you have **till I come.**”

3:11, “Behold **I come** quickly.”

11:17, “The One **Who is to come** ...You have taken your great power and **reigned.**...”

14:14-20, The earth is “**harvested**” and “**reaped**” by “One like the Son of Man.”

16:15, “Behold **I am coming** as a thief.”

And now it happens. Yes, this is the **only time** Jesus comes to earth. This is the **only time** Heaven is opened to release the Living Word. This is the **only time** the full army of Heaven is seen with Jesus.

And is there **any question as to the identity** of this coming King? The Spirit has framed the entire event in language from *other parts of Revelation*, the *prophets*, the *apostles*. This is Jesus. **He is:**

- **Faithful and True (19:11)**, as in 3:14, introducing Himself to the Laodiceans.
 - **Righteous Judge and Warrior (19:11)**, as in Isaiah 11:4
 - **possessed of eyes as a flame of fire (19:12)**, as in 1:14
- crowned with many crowns (19:12)**. When the seventh angel sounded (11:15) it was announced that this world’s Kingdoms became the Christ’s. All of them. Here He is seen
- wearing the crowns He so richly deserves.

- **said to have His own special Name (19:12)**, unknown to anyone but Himself. Well, in verse 13 His Name is “Word of God” but we know that Name. In verse 16, the Name written on Him is “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” But we know that Name too. What is that secret Name? That is for Him to know. His own people have been promised a unique name also, in 2:17.
- **clothed with the blood-dipped Robe (19:13)**. No, that is not His own blood from Calvary. Isaiah 63:2-3 lines up with Revelation 14 and this passage to let us know that Jesus will personally judge sin at His coming and create an unprecedented blood-bath among the nations. He is seen in this robe in anticipation of what He is about to do but also because of what He has been allowing to happen for all time. He is the One who judges sin. His is the control of the universe after all.
- **the Word of God (19:13)**, as from John’s own Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh.” (John 1:1, 14)
- **united to His church (19:14)**. In Matthew 24:31, the elect are “gathered from the four winds.” I Thessalonians 4:14-17 says God will bring with Him “those who sleep in Jesus.” And, “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” And in I Corinthians 15:51-52, “We shall all be changed in a moment...at the last trumpet” (aka the seventh trumpet) I submit to the church members who read this document that there is absolutely no conflict between the verses I have just quoted and the scene John paints of the second coming of the Lord. I submit further that there is *not one reason* to take those former verses out of their normal context and make them apply to *anything but that second coming*.
- **wielding the Sword that strikes the nations (19:15)**. Isaiah 11:4, He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. The Sword is the Word that comes out of His mouth : The Word of God is even *sharper* than a sword (Hebrews 4:12).
- **ruling with a rod of iron (19:15)**. In Psalm 2:8, Messiah is told “Ask of Me [the Father] and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them [the nations] with a rod of iron.” The male child of Revelation 12:5, supervising the overcomers of 2:27, is scheduled to control *absolutely* the planet.
- **the Treader of the winepress (19:15)**. Again, Isaiah 63:3, “I have trodden the winepress alone.” This very scene has been played out in chapter 14, a holocaust of unprecedented proportions. Flesh for birds to eat.
- **King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16)**. Make no mistake. He is coming to reign, and reign totally, supremely. The kings of earth, as Nebuchadnezzar of old (Daniel 2:47), will learn who he is as their kingdom is ripped from them and given to Jesus. Only He will be King in that day. For a reference to this grand fact, see Psalms such as 2, 10, and 45.

Now that we know Who He is, and what claim to authority He makes, **let us see what He does (19:17-18)**: We were led to believe that the 4th and 5th bowl judgments did away with the sun for a short period just before the return of Jesus. But here an angel stands “in the sun”. Perhaps the damage to the sun was temporary. Or perhaps the angel is standing in John’s sky of the first century painting the picture of the supper of flesh.

The strange **announcement given to birds** is not new to the Scriptures. 700 years earlier God had told Ezekiel to speak to those winged creatures also (39:17 ff): “Assemble your-

selves and come... Gather together from all sides to my sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you... on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty...you shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men and with all the men of war.” Much of this is word for word like the passage before us.

Here then is the link between **Ezekiel’s end-time war (Ezekiel 38-39)**, and John’s. There are other connections. Ezekiel says this conflict will be in “the latter years”, will involve European nations, names of which match the table of such places in Genesis 10. **Daniel** agrees, mentioning the “king of the north” and “tidings out of the north” that trouble the end-time king (Daniel 11). A “great earthquake” is part of the scenario (Ezekiel 38:19) and the fact that “the nations shall know that I am the Lord.” Yes, the King of Kings will indeed take His crowns, as we have already seen. “I will set my glory among the nations” (38:21) is the promise given. Ezekiel and John saw the same day, the coming of Armageddon.

We have seen the approach of Jesus in verses **11-16**. **Now comes anti-Jesus** against Him (**19:19**). The incredible thing about the confrontation of verses **19-21** is that the enemy of our souls believes he really can, with the powers given him by God, defeat God. Here is tremendous pride, of the sort that leads to eternal destruction, *self-esteem* taken to its ultimate.

With demonic aid, he will summon the earth’s kings to a war. **They will respond**. His intention will be to attack Jesus and the entire church as they descend together! He will be utterly crushed. Obviously most copies of the Scriptures, that tell of all this in plain detail, will not be a major factor in the world’s population. The Bible will probably have been destroyed or ignored for many years. Only the few saints left (see Daniel 12 for a description of the blessed ones at the end) will know and understand what is happening.

So here sits **the little horn**, thinking he is a big horn, “the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain” (Daniel 11). The nations rage! (Psalm 2:1 ff) The people plot a vain thing! “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed!” What is their thinking? The same as always: “**Let us break their bonds in pieces** and cast away their cords from us!”

And Heaven’s response? Psalm 2:4, “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath: ‘I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion’ ”

Then the beast is captured and with the false prophet **thrown into the lake of fire (19:20)**. Or as Daniel says it, “**He shall come to his end**, and no one will help him” (11:45). There follows in Daniel an unequaled time of trouble, the coming of Jesus, resurrections, judgments, etc. Just like what is about to happen here in Revelation. The prophets agree.

What next? With the two leaders gone, the battle, such as it was, *and it wasn’t*, is over. It’s time now to kill everyone else in the same way: the sword that proceeds from Jesus’ mouth (**19:21**), His sharp and mighty Word. Now comes that **slaughter of millions upon millions** gathered to oppose Jesus. Kings, captains, mighty men, horses, horse-riders, free, slaves fighting to be free, small, great. These were the ones who so hated Jesus Christ that when the call from demons came to replace Christ as Lord of the Earth once and for all, they responded. They are all now dead. The only sound you can hear is the noisy squawking of preying birds enjoying the feast of a lifetime.

With Part Ten we will enter into the description of **life after Jesus’ return**.