



Fallen, Fallen is Babylon (part 2)

Revelation 18:9-24

1. Overview (verses 1-3)
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The "Doomsday Clock" is a symbolic representation of the world's proximity to global catastrophe. Midnight represents doomsday, the time when humanity through "unchecked scientific and technological advances" wipes itself from the planet. The time on the Doomsday Clock isn't to be interpreted as actual time. Rather, it's an expression of how close we may be to the time when human-made global catastrophe takes place.

The Doomsday Clock was created in 1947 by the "Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists." This group was formed in the aftermath of World War II, with the dawning of the Atomic age. Every year, this organization meets and publishes the time where they believe we are in the course of history. In the early days, the "Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists" originally took into account the threat of nuclear weapons. But since 2007, they have expanded their scope to include any human factor that they believe would contribute to a potential human extinction.^[1] So, today they take into consideration the following variables: geopolitical developments and other advances in technology, such as artificial intelligence.

The first clock was first set in 1947 at 7 minutes to midnight. Two years later (1949), when the Soviet Union conducted their first nuclear bomb test, the clock moved to 3 minutes to midnight. During the end of the end of the cold war in 1991, it was moved way back to 17 minutes before midnight. In 2007, "climate change" was taken into consideration in the setting of the Doomsday clock at 5 minutes to midnight. In 2020, with the rise of "disinformation campaigns," the clock moved to 100 seconds before midnight.

Just this past week, on Tuesday, January 23, with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, with world tensions at their height, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have set the Doomsday to be 90 seconds before midnight. This is the closest to midnight that the clock has ever been. Now, of course, this clock is "an imperfect metaphor."^[2] But it does create awareness of how we humans can destroy our planet. We can wipe ourselves out. If the nuclear warheads in the United States and Russia and China were all launched, human beings could cease to exist on planet earth.

Well, this morning as we come to the book of Revelation, we see Doomsday. We see the day when human beings are wiped from the planet. What a wonderful message I have for you this morning! So, if you haven't done so already, I invite you to take your Bibles and open them to Revelation 18. We began looking at this chapter last week. We will conclude the chapter this morning.

Last week, my message was entitled, "Fallen, Fallen is Babylon" part 1. This week, my message is entitled, "Fallen, Fallen is Babylon (part 2)." Let me read for you the entirety of Revelation 18.

Revelation 18

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
She has become a dwelling place for demons,
a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.
For all nations have drunk
the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;
for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.
Pay her back as she herself has paid back others,

and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.
As she glorified herself and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,
since in her heart she says,
'I sit as a queen,
I am no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.'
For this reason her plagues will come in a single day,
death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her."

And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

"Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come."

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

"The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendors
are lost to you,
never to be found again!"

The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

"Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!
For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

"What city was like the great city?"

And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

"Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.
Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

"So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more;
and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more,
and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more,
and the sound of the mill
will be heard in you no more,
and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more,
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more,
for your merchants were the great ones of the earth,

and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.
And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth."

By way of reminder, this entire chapter flows from the final bowl of the wrath of God. The backbone of Revelation is made up of three vertebrae: the seals, trumpets and bowls. These are the judgments of God that are poured out upon the world. The seal judgments come in chapter 6. The trumpet judgments come in chapters 8 and 9. The bowl judgments come in chapter 16.

There are seven of each of these judgments: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Each time a seal is opened or a trumpet is blown or a bowl is poured out, some sort of judgment comes upon the earth. Each of these judgments get worse and worse until the final bowl of Revelation 16. With the pouring out of the last bowl, God says, "It is done!" (Revelation 16:17). But that doesn't mean that God is done telling the story. To that, we have Revelation 17 and 18. They are giving the details of what happened during the seventh bowl.

Revelation 17 and 18 are telling the same story, from two different vantage points. These chapters expand upon Revelation 16:19 which says, "The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath." That is, finishing the wrath of God upon those on the earth who refuse to repent! It's Doomsday, if you will.

Revelation 17 gave us the picture of God judging the great prostitute, which is a symbol of wickedness. A prostitute is one who forsakes her husband. So also this prostitute symbolizes all who forsake the Lord. Revelation 18 gives us a picture of God judging Babylon, which is a symbol of worldliness. Babylon is the great city, filled with wealth and worldliness. So also Babylon symbolizes those who have cared more about the pleasures of the world than they cared about the Lord.

The message of Revelation is that "Babylon has fallen." Last week, we looked at verses 1-8.

1. Overview (verses 1-3)

These verses give the big picture of the fall of Babylon. They are like Revelation 16:19, which tells of the big picture of the destruction of Babylon. You see it right there in verse 2.

Revelation 18:2
Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

Verse 3 gives the reason for this fall.

Revelation 18:3
For all nations have drunk
the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

That is, of the nations of the world have become intoxicated by the allure of wealth and wickedness. They have become self-sufficient. They have neglected God. and their just judgment has come. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon."

2. Preview (verses 4-8)

That is, what takes place just before the destruction of the city. There is one last call for repentance.

Revelation 18:4
Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;

This is God giving one last chance to those living in the worldliness of luxury.

Revelation 18:7
As she glorified herself and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,

Note the swiftness of the judgment. This comes in verse 8.

Revelation 18:8
For this reason her plagues will come in a single day,
death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

This is a preview of what will take place in the world. There will be a sudden judgment of God. Verse 8 tells us that this judgment will come "in

a single day." The Doomsday clock says that we are 90 seconds from the end of the destruction of humanity. Verse 8 tells us this will take but a single day. It seems as if this day takes the world off guard. They were not prepared for the suddenness of the judgment.

3. Review (verses 9-19)

Verses 9 through 19 have those in the world looking back at the destruction of Babylon. They lament the glory of the city that once was, but is now destroyed. There are three groups of people who lament.

First see the kings:

Revelation 18:9-10

And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

"Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come."

These kings probably represent all of the rulers of the world. Those who stood in great power and lived in luxury. They will weep at the swift judgment of God. "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." They will not weep in repentance. They will not lament their sins that have brought God's destruction upon the city. They will weep because they have lost their power and influence. Where once there was this city that they ruled, there is no longer any city. and they no longer have any rule.

Next, we see the merchants:

Revelation 18:11-14

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

"The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendors
are lost to you,
never to be found again!"

All of the world's luxury and opulence will be gone. No more trade. No more wealth. All that's left is the memory. God will take away the precious stones (gold, silver, jewels, pearls). God will take away the fine clothing (fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth). God will take away the decorations (scented wood, articles of ivory, articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble). God will take away the fragrance (cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense). God will take away the foods (wine, oil, fine flour, wheat) God will take away the beast of the earth who serve us so well (cattle and sheep, horses and chariots). God will take away the slave labor, which enriched so many. Slaves, that is, human souls. Then, they weep just like the kings of the earth wept.

Revelation 18:15-17

The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

"Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!
For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

Again, we see no repentance in these merchants, just sorrow for their loss. No longer will these merchants be able to enrich themselves with their trading. No longer will these merchants live in the pleasure of the world. It's all going away.

Rather than laying up for themselves treasures in heaven, they were laying up for themselves treasures on the earth. As Jesus warned us in the Sermon on the Mount, this is not the wise course of action. He said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

In light of Revelation 18, you could change the words of Jesus a bit. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, which will all be destroyed in the judgment.

Then, we come to the third group of people: the sailors.

Revelation 18:17-19

...And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

“What city was like the great city?”

And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

Again, the pattern of lament is the same. As they look back and review the glories of Babylon, all they can do is cry out and lament, “What city was like the great city?” Their mourning is selfish. They are ruined, and so they are sorrowful. This is worldly repentance, sorrowing over what you have lost. This is in contrast to godly repentance, which sorrows over you sin and how it grieves God.

Note again this theme, “in a single hour she has been laid waste.” We have seen this single hour mentioned several times in verses 10, 17, 19. When God’s judgment comes, it comes swift and complete. With this picture that John saw, all it took was a single hour and all was laid to waste and ruined.

When we think about the sailors, I can’t help but think about the Titanic. That ocean liner that was the pride of the world. We had never built a big ship like this before, and it was ready for its maiden voyage. It was fancy and decked out. There were pleasures and balls and music and drinks and everything! That by the way, is the earth. The earth is the Titanic. Then on April 15th, 1912, on its maiden voyage, the Titanic sank. It struck an iceberg and some 15,000 people died.

The only lack of parallel here is that not everyone died in the Titanic wreck. There were some that were saved. But, when the Titanic hit the iceberg, it only took a little bit of time to fall underneath and it is now in the bottom of the sea. All the wealth, all the luxury, all the pleasures, music, dancing and drinking, all that worldliness, gone. It was the pinnacle of comfort and luxury, all gone.

Likewise that is what we see here. With God’s judgement, this single hour. Like the ship that hit the iceberg that is all gone, there will be a day when Babylon, the treasure of the world, with all its luxuries and pleasures, is going away.

The message to us is simple. Are you ready for such a swift and complete judgment to come? Are you ready to have everything you have on the earth to be taken away? This is what Revelation 18 is teaching us! This world is passing away! So don’t place your hope on riches of the world. It’s all going to be destroyed.

The warning from 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is to be heard by us all: “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Now, of course there is a balance to this. In the same letter of 1 Timothy, we read “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:4).

Revelation 18 and the judgment of Babylon isn’t a call to reject the world. God has given us good gifts, which he wants for us to enjoy. But just don’t hold on too tightly.

4. Worldview (verse 20)

At this point, it seems as if there is a change of voice. Because, verse 20 sets forth how we ought to look at the judgment of God that comes upon the world. You might be thinking that Revelation 18 is a passage for us to hate, as it strips away all of the wealth of the world in the judgment of God. Indeed, we should lament the judgment of God that comes upon an unbelieving world. But there’s another response. For believers, we should rejoice in the judgment of God.

Revelation 18:20
Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!

Too often, we can look at these passages of judgment with sorrow. But there is a real way that we should rejoice at the judgment of God, because it vindicates God and his holiness that cannot tolerate sin. We rejoice at the judgment of God in the same way that the world rejoices at the judgment of those who have caused great harm to the world.

I watched a bit of the trial of Darrell Brooks this week, the man who drove an SUV through the annual Christmas parade in Waukesha, Wisconsin in 2021. He killed 6 people and injured 62 others. He was found guilty in a court of law. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility or eligibility of supervision in each of the six deaths he caused to be served consecutively.

At the sentencing, Judge Jennifer Dorow read the names of those who he had run over with his SUV. When the sentence of each homicide was read, there was applause in the courtroom. She read “One life sentence for Virginia Sorenson” and there was applause. “One life sentence for LeAnna Owen” and there was applause. “One life sentence for Tamara Durand” and there was applause. “One life sentence for Jane Kulich” and there was applause. “One life sentence for Bill Hospel” and there was applause. “One life sentence for Jackson Sparks” and there was applause. The people in that courtroom understood that justice had been served! and the sentence was just!

In a similar way, when Babylon and this world’s system is destroyed, the call to heaven, and the call to all the saints, is for joy and rejoicing!

Because (as verse 20 says),

Revelation 18:20

...for God has given judgment for you against her!

We know that the Scripture says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord." This is the time when God pays. For all of you who love justice, this will be a time of rejoicing. Not at the death of the wicked, but at the vindication of God.

In Ezekiel 18:23, God asks, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" That's the point of verse 4.

Revelation 18:4

Come out of her, my people!

God wants for people to turn from their sin! God isn't anxiously awaiting the day when the Doomsday Clock strikes midnight because he is so looking forward to destroying the world. Though, he is looking forward to that day for his full vindication. The Lord has been tolerating sin for years and decades and centuries and millennia. But at this moment in history, when the final judgment comes, there will be rejoicing! The whole earth rejoices at his coming.

"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness" (Psalm 96:11-13).

"Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity" (Psalm 98:7-9 7).

The creation knows that the final judgment of God is a time for rejoicing! Do you? Do you see Revelation 18 and rejoice?

5. Oceanview (verses 21-24)

Revelation 18:21-24

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

"So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more;
and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more,
and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more,
and the sound of the mill
will be heard in you no more,
and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more,
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more,
for your merchants were the great ones of the earth,
and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.
And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth."

Nothing is more lost than buried in the heart of the sea.

On September 17, 2023, a F-35 fighter jet was on a training mission from Joint Base Charleston. After a malfunction with the jet, the pilot ejected over Charleston, South Carolina. He parachuted into the backyard of a North Charleston resident. He knocked on the door and said to the woman who answered, "Ma'am, a military jet crashed. I'm the pilot. We need to get rescue rolling. I'm not sure where the airplane is. It would have crash landed somewhere. I ejected."

The pilot wasn't the only one who didn't know where the jet had crashed. The nation went on mission to find the missing jet. The US military even asked the nation for help in finding the jet. After a day, the wreckage of the jet was located, some 60 miles from the ejection site. But it was found.

Contrast this with what happened on March 8, 2014, nearly a decade ago. Malaysian Airlines Flight 370, was on a international passenger flight from Malaysia to Beijing. Contact with the plane was lost 38 minutes after takeoff. And the flight simply disappeared into the South China Sea. All 227 passengers and 12 crew aboard are presumed dead. But here's the thing, the world has searched and searched and searched for this airplane, but it has not been found. The search has become the most expensive search in the history of aviation.

What's the difference between these two planes? One crashed on the ground and was found in a day. The other crashed (presumably) into the heart of the sea, and remains missing to this day! That's the point, Babylon will be cast into the sea, never to surface again. In fact, did you notice the finality of the destruction?

Revelation 18:22-23

and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more,

This will happen with Babylon. The music will be stilled. Business will die. Domestic life will cease. Houses will be dark and festivities will fail. Babylon is merely a representation the entire world. This is Doomsday. So what? There is a coming judgment.

Notice there is a big difference between 90 seconds till midnight and actual Doomsday. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist would lead us to believe that we ourselves, in our own power, are going to blow ourselves up with atomic power. That won't happen. It's God whose going to come in judgment. It's God who's going to take care of things.

On the one fold, there's terror. On the other hand there's reason for rejoicing because God is vindicating himself. Then we see verse 24.

Revelation 18:24

And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth.

This speaks about their sin. They were anti-God. They were going against the prophets and the saints and those who were living righteously. They were going against God's ways.

That's the message of Revelation 18. "Fallen, Fallen is Babylon." Don't put your hope in this world. Don't place your hope in this city. Don't place your hope in the city of Rockford. Place your hope in Christ!

"When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun." That's the hope of the glories of Jesus, to be with him forever, rather than the worldly system that will be destroyed.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 28, 2024 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doomsday_Clock

[2] <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/23/world/doomsday-clock-2024-climate-scni/index.html>