

Revelation 18:1: *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

Ezekiel 43:2: *And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.*

Benson Commentary on Holy Scripture: *A bright and shining light, it seems, usually attended the appearance of angels. The splendor of the appearance [was] greater in proportion as the angel appearing was more honorable. Sending an angel of superior rank alludes to the custom of courts in employing persons of high dignity, according to the weight and importance of the commissions they were to execute. We may observe here, if such be the luster of the servant, in lightening all the earth with his glory, what image could display the higher majesty of the Lord, who has thousands of thousands of those same glorious angelic attendants ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him!*

The Angel coming down from Heaven reflects the glory of God to such a degree that the earth shines not with its own decadent sin but with the glory of the God who is about to cast His final judgment on that decadent sin. The Fall of Babylon begins by magnifying the contrast of God's reflected light with Babylon's light. What had seemed mighty, the allure of kings, is picayune in contrast to God.

Revelation 18:2: *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

Isaiah 21:9: *And behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.*

Isaiah 13:19-21: *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.*

C.S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*: *That is why, at the end of all things, when the sun rises here and the twilight turns to blackness down there, the Blessed will say, "we have never lived anywhere except in heaven," and the Lost, "We were always in Hell." And both will speak truly.*

The parallel construction between Revelation 18:2 and Isaiah 21:9 ("Babylon is fallen, is fallen") conveys to the reader that Isaiah's specific prophecy about Babylon is being fulfilled here at the Final Judgment. The triumph is not just that sin is defeated. It is that the prophecies of old have been fulfilled, which means that God's Providence throughout history, understood by men only in bits and pieces on account of sin, had been true from the start. The hope that we had had in Him, notwithstanding our ignorance ("we see through a glass, darkly"), and notwithstanding all that we had suffered in remaining faithful to Him, had never been in vain. This shall be clear to us as we witness the Fall of Babylon. Like C.S. Lewis said, we shall realize that we had been with God all along, and He had been with us, as indicated by God's Word revealed to us in prophecy. Moreover, the Fall of Babylon is final. Going forward, "it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." In the new creation about to be unveiled, there will be no space for the decadent sin of the archetypal Babylon. Recall that judgment is revelation – it is simply removing the veil from what is true. So, in judging Babylon, God is revealing Babylon from the start to have been a lifeless place. He is also revealing that from the start He has been with us in protecting us from the allure of that lifeless sin. We are simply seeing what always is.

Revelation 18:4: *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

1 John 2:15: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Jeremiah 51:6: *Flee out of the midst of Babylon and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.*

For a person not to love the world, it is not good enough that he refrains from the world in his mind. He must refrain from the world in his speech and in his actions. This is why John refers to “the things that are in the world” in 1 John 2:15, for the things are outside of ourselves and thus refer to how we interact with what is outside of ourselves. Who we are interiorly is only a part of the picture, for we must be true to God also in who we are exteriorly (in relation to “things”). The reason is that we are interior and exterior beings – spiritual and psychic, which together are pertaining to our interior lives – and physical and sensual, which together are pertaining to our exterior lives. We must give everything to God – the interior and the exterior of ourselves – and conversely the devil seeks to undermine us interiorly (in manipulating thoughts) and exteriorly (in exaggerating sensual passions). The other reason is that, since our interior and exterior lives affect one another, our relationship to the “things” around us (first encountered exteriorly) will impact our thoughts and our spiritual disposition (what is first encountered exteriorly later will be processed and given meaning interiorly). So, we must “flee out of the midst of Babylon” (our exterior relationship with the “things” of Babylon) in order then to “deliver every man his soul” (“work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” as St. Paul writes in referring to our eternal life). The parallel construction with Jeremiah 51:6 again shows that the prophecies of old here are being fulfilled. From the start, God intended for us to see how history (man’s exterior lives in relationship with one another) interplays with our souls (man’s interior life), and vice versa. The implications are as follows: No man ever has been an island unto himself, no matter what that man may think, and every event in history has had spiritual implications far greater than it would have seemed at the time. Every life is lived in community, and history is spiritual. If this is the case, then God has been setting the stage for His new creation throughout the history of His old creation, for the new creation is all about living in community in the spiritual Body of Christ.

Revelation 18:21: *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

Exodus 15:4-5: *Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.*

Matthew 18:3: *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 18:6: *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

Like the giant millstone that is submerged beneath the waves, never again to ascend from the depths, so Babylon will sink to a position from which it cannot return. God's protection of the faithful is decisive. Just as Pharaoh and his henchmen are literally obliterated beneath the Red Sea, so Babylon is obliterated and never again able to tempt the People of God away from their King. Babylon symbolizes not just sin but the temptation to sin – hence the gaudy allure of her opulence described like a seductive harlot. Notice that Christ Jesus in Matthew 18 is referring to "these little ones" being offended. In this context, the little children are the faithful living in the Kingdom of God. He is saying in essence that someone who would "offend" the faithful living in the Kingdom of God will be obliterated, for it would be "better" for the offender if he had that same millstone hanging from his neck when cast into the sea. God's Tabernacle will be secured beyond reproach, impenetrable to the temptation of sin, so that the faithful living in Him may never again fear the temptations of a serpent or the allures of a Babylon. Now, at first glance it may seem that we are still weak in the flesh even when living in God's Tabernacle – hence, the extreme measures He will undertake to protect us. Nevertheless, the truth is the opposite: We

shall be so far removed from sin and temptation that the allures of a Babylon will be for us an “offense.” In protecting us to this extent, God is acknowledging that, as we faithful have been awarded our incorruptible crowns, so we shall be beyond where we should be “offended.”

Revelation 19:3: *And again, they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

Genesis 19:28: *And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.*

Earlier, we saw Babylon compared to Sodom and Gomorrah in the context of the syncretism of religious and cultic practices. Spiritual degradation leads to a psychic madness and insufficient restraint on the passions. Spirit-Mind-Body corrupt one another when one is corrupted, and the result is the mayhem of Sodom and Gomorrah and, later, Babylon. Now, we see the end result of this corruption: The smoke of a furnace fire arising forever. The question arises of why there is an everlasting fire if the sin has been vanquished. What is there still to burn? Holy Scripture is unclear, but there may be two reasons: First, the everlasting smoke is a reminder of the sin that had been defeated. Just as the Risen Christ Jesus still has the wounds of His Crucifixion, even as death no longer has any hold on Him, so the everlasting smoke reminds the faithful that sin had to be defeated for them to be where they are now with God. Secondly, the everlasting smoke is reminiscent of incense offered onto God’s Altar. What had been sin is not only defeated. It is by grace made an acceptable sacrifice unto the Father in Heaven. All is made to give glory to God.

Revelation 19:7-8: *Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

Ephesians 5:25-27: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that*

*he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Matthew Henry's Commentary: *Then the church of Christ, being purified from errors, divisions, and corruptions, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and practice, will be made ready to be publicly owned by him as his delight and his beloved. The church appeared; not in the gay, gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white. In the robes of Christ's righteousness, imputed for justification, and imparted for sanctification. The promises of the gospel, the true sayings of God, opened, applied, and sealed by the Spirit of God, in holy ordinances, are the marriage-feast. This seems to refer to the abundant grace and consolation Christians will receive in the happy days which are to come.*

Occurring just after the Fall of Babylon, we see that God obliterates sin and temptation not just to cast judgment on what is bad but to set the stage for what is good, namely, the joyful coming together of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride. God rips out the weeds, and He plows the field, in order to plant the seeds of a new field.

Revelation 19:11-16: *And I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, And Lord of Lords.*

Hebrews 4:13: *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

*Proverbs 30:4: Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?*

We see the Risen Christ Jesus, the Word of God, which is to say God's self-revelation in history. He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Majesty upon which rests all of creation. He takes up the cause Himself of fighting for that creation against Satan and his minions who seek at this point to pervert as much of creation as possible before their annihilation. God Himself delivers us from our enemies. He sees everything for what it truly is and acts accordingly – hence, He is described as having eyes as “a flame of fire” that, like fire, burn away the impurities to observe what is real. He has a name written, which no man may know but Himself. This signifies that He is divine. There will remain forever an incomprehensible mystery about God, which means we must always approach Him with faith. Our faith will not be blind, though, but rather rooted and grown in the certainty that God will fight for us so that no one again may separate us from Him.