

Chapter Eighteen

Jerusalem's Destruction

18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

Angel coming down from heaven: As messengers, angels are typically seen in the OT as God Himself. (Gen 22:15-16; 31:11, cf. 13; Exo 3:2 cf. 4; etc) Twice do we see an angel (heavenly messenger) descending to the earth, both times dealing with *authority*. Here, the earth is lit up with glory. The second time shows an angel coming down holding the key to the abyss and holding a great chain with which to bind Satan (demonstrating authority). Both angels seem to be two portrayals of Jesus Christ, since they have “great authority.” Since the Law was handed down through an angel, it would be no surprise to see them dispensing the Gospel. (Gal 3:19)

Earth was illumined with his glory: When truth (light illuminating men) shouts forth, deception (Satan's darkness) is eliminated and Satan is effectively bound.

18:2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

Not only does this messenger have *great authority*, he also has a *mighty voice*. Both are related to the message's great power concerning God's plan of redemption in the New Covenant.

Fallen is Babylon: This is a quote from Isaiah: “Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs. And one answered and said, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.’” (Isa 21:9) If something is brought *down*, it implies that something else has been *exalted*. Israel is cast down. God's promise to the former chosen nation has been taken from the Jews due to her rebellion and is now given to the church.

Dwelling place of demons: Home of demons. (Num 24:21) Whenever demons are found in the bible, their home is within people. (Matt 7:22; 8:31; Mark 16:9; Luke 4:41) In Revelation, the spirits of demons go out *to* the kings of the whole world to war against God. In other words, these demonic spirits go *upon* the kings of the world, either through alliances or by position (they stand *by* or *next to* the kings). To illustrate this influence, an angel told Daniel, “the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.” (Dan 10:13-14) Here, this dwelling place of demons is Babylon, the Great Harlot, Jerusalem.

Prison of every unclean spirit: Most early prisons were pits in the ground. (Jer 41:7) Kings in the OT were sometimes imprisoned when their city was captured, (Jer 52:11) as were the prophets. (2 Chr 16:10) It's unlikely that any prison is a good place to reside, regardless of the

amenities. Here, unclean spirits (fallen angels) find themselves locked up within fallen Jerusalem.

Prison of every unclean and hateful bird: Hateful means detested. Of all the animals listed on the unclean list in Leviticus, only birds are itemized by name. The idea of a city becoming the haunt of such creatures comes from Isaiah, in a diatribe against “all the nations.” The language suggests that the downfall is utter and final. The demons, spirits and birds are all representative of heavenly—literally *spiritual*—rebellion found in the hearts of men. Note:

For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its loose earth into brimstone, and its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; *its smoke shall go up forever; from generation to generation it shall be desolate; none shall pass through it forever and ever.* But pelican and hedgehog shall possess it, and owl and raven shall dwell in it; and He shall stretch over it the line of desolation and the plumb line of emptiness. Its nobles—there is no one there whom they may proclaim king—and all its princes shall be nothing. (Isa 34:8–12)

Jerusalem is no longer made up of God’s chosen. It is inhabited by creatures of the air—demons, spirits and birds—all metaphors for spiritual unrighteousness and uncleanness existing in the hearts of men. The fact that this city *becomes* a dwelling place of evil refutes the notion that it’s Rome. Rome and all the other Gentile cities were *already* habitats for demonic powers. This city was once free from such influence, suggesting it to be Jerusalem, the place of God’s chosen people, Israel.

18:3 “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”

When it comes to money, men will compromise their very souls. “The love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Tim 6:10) One has only to look at what was going on in the temple when Jesus threw the money changers out. It had been turned into a den of hucksters, chiselers, and thieves. (Matt 21:12, 13; John 2:13-17) Jerusalem had turned from being the religious light of the ancient world to little more than a center of commerce, a gathering place for carnivorous birds to pick men clean.

We see three groups who are culpable in God’s sight:

- Nations The Roman authorities who shared in the shedding of innocent blood
- Kings of the earth The Jews who became ensnared in their nation’s madness
- Merchants Those who profited from or contributed to Israel’s sins (idol makers, temple prostitutes, related commerce)

Wine of the passion of her immorality: This is the second time the term is used. The first time is in 14:8. (See notes there.)

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” (Rev 14:8)

Kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her: The kings of the earth are part of the

Jewish nation, as we have already seen. They were partakers of those who rejected the Messiah.

I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before *the sons of Israel* (kings of the earth), to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. (Rev 2:14)

I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray (kings of the earth), so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. (Rev 2:20)

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom *the kings of the earth* committed acts of immorality.” (Rev 17:1–2)

The kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning. (Rev 18:9)

Merchants of the earth: First, we find kings of the earth. Here, we have merchants of the earth. Merchants earned a living by buying items from various sources and selling them to others. They are referred to in various translations as traders, dealers, and merchandisers. There were international merchants (Gen 37:28; Prov 31:14) and general merchants. (Ezek 17:4) In Nehemiah’s time, merchants selling goods to Jerusalem stayed close to one another (Neh 3:22; 13:16), a common tactic to keep competition to a minimum and maximize everyone’s profit margins. There was also safety in numbers. Nehemiah had trouble with merchants and traders camping outside of the walls of the city because they distracted people away from the Sabbath. (Neh 13:20) They were, in effect, leading the Israelites astray, causing them to defile the Holy Day. The reason why merchants are viewed dimly by God therefore, is because of their greed. Nehemiah’s example (Neh 13) is an illustration where materialism was interfering with God’s command for the Israelites to observe the Sabbath. Instead of being a holy day, it became another day for shopping, so to speak.

God condemned Jerusalem for playing the harlot with the Chaldeans, a land of merchants. (Ezek 16:29) Revelation defines “the merchants of the earth” as “the great men of the earth.” (18:23) “Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose *merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?*” (Isa 23:8)

Joseph was sold to Ishmaelite merchants by his own brothers (Gen 37:26–28), making the merchants accomplices in that act. Only those with the mark of the beast could buy or sell (13:17), showing how merchants had influenced society by tampering with spiritual values.

Idolatry was a major industry and source of income in the manufacture of idols, shrines, temples, fortune telling, etc. The Gospel turned many away from this pagan nonsense, upsetting regional economics. (Acts 19:24ff) Poor countries today that boast a heavy Catholic presence sell Virgin Mary figurines, pictures of “Christ,” crucifixes of wood, gold, and plastic, and other trinkets. Not only do they turn Christianity into a business venture but they also take our eyes from the spiritual and force them to look upon “things” for comfort and trust. We end up walking by sight instead of faith. They put their trusts in things (idols) they can see and touch. Legalism is similar in that folks cling to rules they can grasp onto for proof of their own righteousness

Merchants are those who supply spiritual *things*. They actively promote and support people’s sins by reinforcing their transgressions. The relationship these merchants had with Israel shows that it was they who *adorned* her with spiritual *things*. Because of her rejection of Jesus Christ, there was a natural

reinforcement, promotion, and influence of idolatry among the nations. The things that profited Israel were not God-sent but came from her reliance on other nations. (Hos 2:6)

18:4–5 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Come out of her, my people: This shows how God wanted to protect the elect from the judgment about to fall on the city. We should not be partakers of those living in darkness (Eph 5:7), but must be partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4), and the Divine Nature. (2 Pet 1:4) This pertains to the destruction of Jerusalem, as Jesus warned His disciples:

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24)

Those in the midst of Jerusalem. Jesus also clarifies the situation by affirming, “These are the days of vengeance, *that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*” This was a clear declaration against the Jews and their seat of power.

So *you* (disciples), also, when *you* see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to *you*, *this generation* will by no means pass away till all things take place. (Luke 21:31-32)

This was not addressed to Christians today, but to the disciples living at that time. The principle of remaining apart from sinners, however, is still applicable:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be My people.” Therefore, “*Come out from among them* and be separate,” says the Lord. “Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” (2 Cor 6:14-17)

That you may not receive of her plagues: This hearkens back to the OT:

Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account. So the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence.” (Jer 14:10–12)

God has remembered her iniquities: The forgiven no longer have their sins remembered by God. (Jer 31:34)

You have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities. I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance; let us argue our case together, state your cause, that you may be proved right. Your first forefather sinned, and your spokesmen have transgressed against me. So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary; and I will consign Jacob to the ban, and Israel to revilement. (Isa 43:24–28)

18:6 “Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

Give back to her double: This comes from the Law, and would be a familiar phrase to the Jewish mind. The Law stipulated that the double payment was levied when the person was caught in certain offenses. In Revelation, Israel had been caught red-handed:

If what (a thief) stole is *actually found alive in his possession*, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. (Exod 22:4)

If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him, and it is stolen from the man’s house, *if the thief is caught*, he shall pay double. (Exod 22:7)

Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. (Isa 40:2)

18:7 “To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’

Israel had exalted itself as God’s co-regent, or ruling partner. They never thought they would be wholly rejected by Jehovah. Not only did they murder the prophets and reject the Christ, but they sought to establish their own righteousness:

For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. (Rom 10:3)

I sit as a queen: The Jews sat as spiritual guides and rulers, when the opposite was true in God’s sight. The idea of sitting means to rule and have authority¹. (Dan 7:10; Mark 16:19) Whenever Jesus taught, he sat. (Matt 5:1; John 8:2) These same phrases appear in Isaiah 47, where God judges Babylon.

I am not a widow: Babylon was prophesied to lose her children and become a widow in one day. (Isa 47:9) The Great Harlot claimed that she was *not* a widow. In other words, the Jews assumed to have God as their husband. Such a lofty position meant she did not need charity, pity, or help. (18:7)

¹ See notes on 3:21 for a detailed explanation of sitting and standing.

This self-righteousness is seen in John 8, where the Pharisees told Jesus, “We have Abraham for our father.” (IE, *I sit as a queen*) They believed their heritage alone made them God’s *defacto* chosen, but Jesus told them their hearts were not in accordance with Abraham’s faith.

“I *know* that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. If you *were* Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” (John 8:37-38)

What were Abraham’s works? Abraham *trusted* God, therefore, it was accounted to him as righteousness. (Rom 4:3) The Pharisees did not trust God nor the Son of God, but only in traditions, circumcision, blood lineage, and self-righteousness through obedience to the Law.

18:8 “For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

In one day: A period of time where God’s pronouncements are suddenly fulfilled.

- ◆ Pekah slew 120,000 in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the God of their fathers. (2 Chr 28:6)
- ◆ Babylon was prophesied to lose her children and become a widow in one day. (Isa 47:9)
- ◆ In a prophecy concerning the New Covenant, sin was to be removed in one day. (Zech 2:10–12)

These and other OT passages suggest that significant events caused by God come quickly and with finality.

Pestilence: The pale horse and its rider had authority to destroy a fourth of the earth with pestilence. (Rev 6:8) Jezebel, the self-proclaimed prophetess who was leading believers away from the truth, was judged by Christ with pestilence. (Rev 2:20–23) (See notes on 6:8)

Mourning: The Israelites showed their grief by wearing sackcloth and ashes. This was also done during confession of and grief over sin. (1 Kgs 21:27) Zechariah wrote that there would be “great mourning in Jerusalem” after Christ had been crucified. (Zech 12:10–11) God told the Israelites that the Day of the Lord would not bring joy to them, but mourning because of their sins. (Amos 5:16–20)

Famine: In a spiritual sense, famine is a complete and utter lack of God’s word. (Amos 8:11–13) God will starve all the gods of the earth (Zeph 2:11), meaning that His truth will prevail over what is false. Famine is called breaking the staff of bread—that which keeps one alive. (Ezek 5:16)

Burned up with fire: Consumed in judgment, which was literally fulfilled when the Romans burned Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Greek means *to burn wholly or burn to the ground*. In Revelation, earth, trees, and grass—all symbols for people (8:7)—and the Great Harlot are all burned up. It is a judgment of God. (Isa 9:19) The plague of locusts spoken of by Joel resulted in the land being “burned up” by the utter and complete devastation of vegetation. (Joel 1:19) Unfruitful works of the Christian are burned up. (1 Cor 3:15) The heavens and earth will be burned up (2 Pet 3:10), signifying complete and total destruction.

18:9–10 “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

Kings of the earth: The Jews became ensnared in their own apostasy and wept over the nation’s fall. That fall was caused by their own rejection of the Christ.

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. *In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem.* (Zech 12:10–11)

The pouring out of the Spirit caused the Jews to “look on” (Hebrew = *consider* and *focus their attention towards*) Christ. One would think that the Spirit of grace and supplication would have been a source of happiness but the opposite was true. It did not result in joy, but mourning. What were they weeping and lamenting over? That they had murdered their own Messiah, and the Holy Spirit had convicted them of sin.

“Therefore let all the *house of Israel* know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom *you* crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:36–37)

The merchants were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like the great city?” Note:

There were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’” (Luke 23:27–30)

In other words, women who didn’t have children would be blessed. Why? Because those that did would be eating their children to stay alive in the horror that was to come on Jerusalem. Being crushed by the mountains would be preferable. Although Zechariah predicted the nation of Israel would “weep bitterly” over the Messiah, the Jews zealously opposed the preaching of the Gospel right up until the end.

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and *now tell you even weeping*, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. (Phil 3:18)

Paul expresses his grief at the loss of those Jews who rejected the Lord:

I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart (*weep for yourselves and for your children*). For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites. (Rom 9:1–5)

Standing at a distance: Meaning, *to hide*. (Exo 2:4) Placing distance between ones' self and calamity is a sign of fear. (Exo 20:18) Distance can also be a boundary that men cannot cross. (Exo 24:1) It is the gulf between opponents. (1 Sam 26:13; 2 Kgs 2:7) Standing at a distance is a result of their obedience to the voice from heaven: "Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues," (18:4) Concerning Jerusalem's fall, Jesus warned His disciples to put distance between themselves and the city before the destruction came:

"...let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (*stand at a distance*); let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak." (Matt 24:16-17)

18:11 "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more;

The destruction of the city was reminiscent of Lot and his family, who fled the city prior to its destruction. Lot's family represents God's people, while Sodom and Gomorrah are OT types of Satan's kingdom.

Out of greed, Balaam prostituted his prophetic abilities to those who could pay. Greed is thus coupled with *cargoes*, or *gain*. The merchants of the earth became rich by the wealth of her *great* sensuality. (Rev 18:3) The word *wealth* is the Greek word for 'power' (*dunamis*). It is used of the power of the Holy Spirit, where Paul said, "...abound in hope by the power (*dunamis*—wealth) of the Holy Spirit." (Rom 15:13)

Keep in mind that we are dealing with relationships here. The Holy Spirit is describing the imminent fall of the Jewish empire and the separation of the righteous from that system. God's people had begun to flee Jerusalem, "not buying their cargoes anymore." The idea is that the beast's influence was being taken apart. No one could buy or sell who were not in league with the beast.

18:12–13 cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.

At first glance, these items appear to paint an overall picture of prosperity, in the same way the precious gems and metals describe the value of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21. However, we may draw some conclusions after examining each in detail.

Israel was God's chosen nation. Her spiritual *value*—represented by the costly items listed here—would be stripped away, leaving her barren and desolate. In speaking of Babylon, Jeremiah wrote, "How the praise of the whole earth is seized! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!" (Jer 51:41) Just as ancient Babylon lost its majesty and power, so too would Jerusalem, but in a spiritual sense. Her utter removal would be a guarantee of worthlessness as far as being a light to the world.

The church (Israel's successor) is described at the end of Revelation as being made of costly jewels

and stones. When Israel was removed from her glory, the fruit they yearned for was gone, and all things that were luxurious and splendid passed away where men would no longer find them. (18:14) In the New Jerusalem (under the New Covenant), however, the nations walk in its light, the kings bring their splendor into it (21:24), and the nations bring their glory and honor into it. (21:26) The Jews, who were supposed to show God's glory to the world, would no longer hold that lamp; it was passed to the church.

Cargoes of gold: The most costly items are mentioned first. Jesus advised the lukewarm church of Laodicea to buy gold refined by fire. (Rev 3:18) Jesus was not speaking of actual gold then, and the text here must remain consistent. Gold tested by fire refers to God's people being refined through suffering. (Zech 13:9) Gold can also be indicative of men, and the test (furnace) is how they react (good or bad) to praise. (Prov 27:21) Refined gold is compared to righteous offerings presented to the Lord. (Mal 3:3)

Silver: Silver was used primarily as monetary exchange. (Acts 3:6; 19:19) Corroded (worthless) silver was a witness against the rich, which would consume their flesh like fire. (James 5:3) Silver was the "lubricant" that Judas used to set the gears in motion for Jesus' arrest and execution by His accusers. (Matt 26:15)

Precious stones: The Great Harlot adorned herself with precious stones, (17:4; 18:12), which were owned by the very wealthy. (1 Kgs 10:2, 10; 2 Chr 3:6; Est 1:6; Ezek 27:22)

Pearls: Depicted as something of great value. (Rev 17:4; 18:12, 16) Thus, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a pearl. (Matt 13:45–46) Since the Greek word comes from *oyster* (literally, *pearl-oyster*), it refers to *hidden* treasure, possessing the knowledge of the word of God. (Prov 2:4) Like an oyster, the truth of scripture must be carefully pried open to get at the meat within. Note the comparison to chapter 9:

The rest of mankind...did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of *gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood*, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. (Rev 9:20)

Where did they get these idols? The Jews were greatly motivated to persecute Christians. Due to their sins, pagan idolatry ran rampant throughout the earth.

Fine linen: Defined in 19:8 as "the righteousness of the saints." The high priest wore fine linen. (Exo 39:28) It was a rich man's garment. (Luke 16:19) The angels ministering in the temple of heaven were "clothed in linen, clean and bright." (Rev 15:6)

Purple, silk, scarlet: Purple and scarlet are colors of royalty. (See notes on 17:4) Although the word silk occurs a few times in the KJV and the NKJV, many scholars think the Hebrew word for *silk* should be rendered *fine linen* or *costly fabric*. (Ezek 16:10, 13; Prov 31:22) Only Jerusalem is mentioned in the OT as having been clothed by God with silk. (Ezek 16:10, 13) The Great Harlot offers her silk for sale. (18:12)

Citron wood: Used during sacrifices because of its fragrance. The word *thuiinos* comes from the Greek word *thuo*, meaning *general slaughter*. Thus, the wood is connected to sacrifices.

Ivory: Solomon's throne was made of ivory. (1 Kgs 10:18) Ornate carvings of ivory were inlaid in thrones, furniture, and the paneling used in expensive homes. (1 Kgs 10:18; Psa 45:8; Ezek 27:6) The prophet Amos condemned the people of Samaria who lived in houses of ivory (Amos 3:15) and slept in beds of ivory. (Amos 6:4) The problem was not in their having wealth, but because it was gained through oppressing the poor. Ivory was specifically mentioned in an oracle against Tyre. (Ezek 27:15) Greed is not only at the heart of most sins, it will also cause many other sins. Scripture simply calls it idolatry. (Col 3:5)

Very costly wood: This is not ordinary wood used for fuel. The Greek word implies those wood items which are highly esteemed, held dear, beloved, or honored. The OT is full of references where wood was a common material used for fashioning idols. (Deut 29:17; Isa 44:19; Jer 10:8)

Bronze: A symbol of strength. Not all metals are valued for their cost; some are needed to do the dirty work. After all, gold urns are not used as chamber pots. Most of the utilitarian objects of the ark and the furnishings within the tabernacle were made of bronze. These included the shovels, fire grates, sockets, utensils, basins, and firepans. (Exo 27) As one of the utility metals, it is not as valuable as gold.² Moses made a bronze serpent that healed men who had been bitten by poisonous snakes when they looked upon it. (Num 21:9) It signified the strength to heal.

Iron: Something that cannot be broken. Daniel was told that a fourth future kingdom (Rome) would be as strong as iron, crushing and shattering other nations. (Dan 2:40) (See notes on 2:28)

Marble: (alabaster, NASB, RSV; chrysolite marble, NIV) Also a symbol for strength, but with the added character of beauty. The Hebrew and Greek words translated *marble* mean *brightness* or *glistening*. David supplied an abundance of marble for the temple. (1 Chr 29:2) Solomon poetically alluded to the strength and beauty of marble. (SOS 5:15) It was used in the palace of Shushan (or Susa). (Est 1:6)

Cinnamon: Cinnamon was an ingredient used in anointing oil. (Exo 30:23) Solomon wrote of cinnamon used as a sexual attraction by both the adulteress (Prov 7:17) and the virgin wife. (SOS 4:14)

Spice: Spices were valuable, expensive, and considered luxury ingredients by Jew and Gentile nations. They were one of the great gifts given to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. (2 Chr 9:9) Spice was apparently added to lamp oil (Exo 35:28) and anointing oil (Exo 25:6) as a scenting agent. It was also burned at funerals. (Jer 34:5) Spices were used more for aromatic purposes rather than for food. (Est 2:12) They were used to prepare bodies for burial. (2 Chr 16:14) Nicodemus brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds" (John 19:39), to prepare Jesus' body for burial.

Incense: Identified in 5:8 as the prayers of the saints.

Perfume: Also known as incense. (Exo 30:35) Perfumes were applied to the feet (Luke 7:38), a freshly washed person (Ruth 3:3), clothing (Psa 45:8), couches or beds (Prov. 7:17), the priest's head (so he would be presentable to God—Psa 133:2), and to dead bodies. (2 Chr 16:14; John 19:39–40) "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so is a man's advice sweet to his friend." (Prov 27:9) The lack of

² Lev 26:19 speaks of God making the Jews' earth "like bronze" instead of gold. It meant their land would not be so desirable, thanks to their sins.

perfume suggests the smell of putrefaction will be prevalent. (Isa 3:24) In the NT, all occurrences of perfume are in reference to the woman who poured it on Jesus' feet. (John 12:3)

Frankincense: An aromatic gum resin obtained from the Boswellia tree. Frankincense was part of the sacred anointing oil. (Exo 30:34) It was used in sacrificial offerings (Lev 2:1), as a fumigant during animal sacrifices (Exo 30:7), and as perfume. (SOS 3:6) It was also presented by the Magi as a gift to baby Jesus. (Matt 2:11)

Wine: A symbol of gladness and prosperity in the present context, but also a metaphor for *consequences*, as in the Harlot's "wine of the passion of her immorality." (14:8; 18:3)

Olive oil: Used as the basic ingredient for anointing oil. (Exo 30:24) The lack of olive oil suggests that there would be no anointing and no light for lamps. (Exo 35:14) The anointing is representative of the Holy Spirit. (Zech 4:12–14)

Fine flour: Fine flour was an integral part of the grain offering known by the Jews. (Lev 2:1–7; 24:5; Num 7) If flour is not being sold, grain offerings are no longer being performed. This is translated as *meat offering* in some versions, but it is more meaningfully rendered *meal* (NKJV) or *cereal offering* (RSV). Meal offerings were prepared and presented to God, symbolically presenting the best fruits of human effort to God to be used as He desired. (Heb 10:5–10) A notable exception was that poor people could present meal offerings as sin offerings. The recognition of the person's unworthiness is emphasized by the fact that a whole burnt offering or a peace offering always accompanied meal offerings. (Lev 2:1; Num 15:1–16) Both offerings were made to atone for sin.

Wheat: The staff of life (see notes on 6:6).

Cattle: Cattle are not necessarily cows (Gen 30:32; 31:10), and may actually be oxen. (2 Sam 6:13) Oxen were a measure of wealth. (Job 42:12; Jer 49:32; Ezek 38:12; Hab 3:17) They were beasts of burden (1 Chr 12:40), work animals (Deut 22:10), meat (Gen 18:7), and sacrificial offerings. (2 Sam 6:13) These animals facilitated celebrations for feasting. (Isa 22:13)

Sheep: Indicative of sacrifice and those of humble character. (Matt 10:6; 25:32; John 10:1ff)

Horses: Symbols of power and warfare, especially when joined with chariots (see notes on 9:7).

Chariots: Mobile fighting platforms. (Exo 14:6–9) Any place where chariots are mentioned in the bible, it is in consequence of war and destruction. (Zech 9:10) Paradoxically, they are portrayed as vehicles of salvation. (Hab 3:8) The chariots and horses of Zechariah 6 are defined as "spirits of heaven." Clouds are called God's chariot. (Psa 104:3) Elijah the prophet was taken into heaven by a fiery team of horses and chariot. (2 Kgs 2:11)

Slaves: Gaza and Tyre were condemned for enslaving entire nations. (Amos 1:6–9) The Greek word *soma* is translated as *a body both of men or animals; a dead body or corpse*. (Thayer)

Human lives: Literally, *the breath or human soul, the essence, which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death* (Thayer). This is the spiritual part of man, which is last on the list. This is ultimately what the Jews destroyed in their religious unrighteousness.

Each of the items above are *symbols*, referring to Jerusalem's attributes of strength, beauty, former glory, and blatant idolatry. The loss of some items also implies a removal of the priesthood and sacrificial system. They are now suddenly taken from the Jews. Earthly merchants, rather than God had provided all of these things to Israel.

The Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. (Deut 30:9–10)

We can try and deduce the meaning from each item in the list, but stated simply: Israel had accumulated great wealth, power and influence (spiritual or otherwise). Her position and accumulations had not come from God, but were the result of idolatrous liaisons with heathen nations. It was these merchants who became “rich by the wealth of her *sensuality*.” The issue is not one of economic prowess, but of intercourse with idols and not relying on the God of Israel. They *lusted* after glory and wealth, and sought it by fleshly venues. God promised them wealth only if they obeyed His Law.

NOTE

The casual reader may think that this was certainly not representative of Israel's condition while under the Roman yoke. Keep in mind, however, that God looks upon a person's life or a nation's reign as one event, not merely what was extant near the end. We see an 89-year-old grandmother, feeble, incoherent, and perhaps kindly. When she dies, we think God will certainly have pity on her. However, God sees the beginning of her life as surely as the end of it. In younger days, she may have been a horrible person. The same goes with Jerusalem. Except for the religious leaders, the Jews seemed to be rather benign. We do well to remember Jesus' words on this issue:

This generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed *since the beginning of the world*, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, *this generation will be held responsible for it all*. (Luke 11:50-51)

In the Jewish religious leaders' eyes, they were an esteemed people—Abraham's offspring, entitled to the blessings and glory related to the patriarchal covenant (“I sit as a queen, in league with the King.”) In God's eyes, however, they had become a tramp. They had rejected His true love, manifested in the sending of His Son, and were relying on their own devices (“I have need of nothing, especially from that *carpenter's* son.”)

When Jesus chased the money changers and hucksters from the temple, He was angry that the temple had been turned into a place of enterprise and opportunity. It's hard for us living in the 21st Century to see anything wrong with what the temple market was doing. After all, many had to travel long distances to offer sacrifices. It was easier to buy at the temple rather than have to drag the animals along with them. What could be wrong with it? we ask ourselves. Part of the problem was extortion relating to the currency exchange rates. The money changers grew fat. None of this facilitated worship

and prayer.

INTERPRETATION	ITEM
Priesthood	Fine linen Purple, silk, scarlet
Idols	Citron wood Ivory Costly wood Bronze Iron Marble
Anointing	Cinnamon Spice Incense Perfume Frankincense
Offerings	Wine Olive oil Fine flour Wheat
Sacrifices	Cattle Sheep
Power	Horses Chariots
The Bottom Line	Slaves & human lives

18:14 “And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.

Fruit you long for: Fruit is often used as a metaphor for *results*. The Jews *longed for* this fruit, implying a desire to possess something they did not have. Yet, it *has gone from you*. In other words, they no longer had what they desired, and never really had it in the first place. They failed to see that they *once* possessed it. They lost it because they did not obey God, nor hear the message of the Gospel. They longed for the *results* of God’s promised salvation, yet it had eluded them:

Take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, *even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.* (Luke 8:18)

The context in Luke (cf. Matt 13:12; 25:29; Mark 4:25) is dealing with the kingdom of God. A gospel parable shows a comparison to Jerusalem’s judgment:

I tell you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have (*the fruit you long for*) shall be taken away. But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence. (Luke 19:26–27)

To properly understand this fruit Israel longed for, we need to look at the only other place in Revelation where fruit appears:

On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:2)

By casual observance, we see that fruit comes from the Tree of Life. The ultimate hope of the Jews was salvation, and in a physical sense, power over Rome. They regarded salvation primarily as a release from bondage from their Roman masters. They longed for this fruit, but its true intent—salvation from sin—was beyond their understanding and desire.

What was the great desire of the Jews? To be kings and conquerors, *yet not by the hand of Jesus Christ*. Their vision did not include a poor carpenter’s son leading them in that direction. Even at His ascension, the apostles asked, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) The apostles knew their humble Lord had resisted earthly kingship before His death. (John 2:25) But when He defeated death they supposed that He would then establish that earthly throne. This shows how deeply the Jewish mind was ingrained in the belief in an earthly kingdom, with Israel ruling over the nations and the Messiah as king. The doctrine of an earthly kingdom, with Christ reigning from Jerusalem for a thousand years, is heartily embraced by well-meaning folks today. However, it is a gross misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom that is found in His church (John 18:36).

All things that were luxurious and splendid: Not only did Israel lose its fruit of desire, but they also lost the spiritual and physical blessings they sought. Because of their rejection of Christ, God would reject them. Unlike their former captivities, however, their communal ties with God would be severed absolutely and with great finality. A remnant would be saved (Rom 9:27; 11:5), but honor would be moved from their nation and given to the church.

18:15–18 “The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’

This declaration is much like the one against Tyre found in Ezekiel 27:

TYRE (Ezekiel 27)	JERUSALEM (Revelation 18)
The ships of Tarshish were the carriers for your merchandise. And you were filled and were very glorious in the heart of the seas. Your rowers have brought you into great waters	The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls.”
They will cast dust on their heads, they will wallow in ashes. Also they will make	They threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe,

TYRE (Ezekiel 27)	JERUSALEM (Revelation 18)
themselves bald for you and gird themselves with sackcloth; and they will weep for you in bitterness of soul with bitter mourning.	woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in 1 hour she has been laid waste!”
In their wailing they will take up a lamentation for you and lament over you: “Who is like Tyre, like her who is silent in the midst of the sea?	Every shipmaster, passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like the great city?”
When your wares went out from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with the abundance of your wealth and with your merchandise you enriched the kings of earth.	All nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.
All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you, and their kings are horribly afraid; they are troubled in countenance. The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more.	...the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.
“Who is like Tyre, like her who is silent in the midst of the sea?” (Ezek 27:32)	(They) were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like the great city?” (18:18) They worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” (Rev 13:4)

Tyre was an economic power, which God destroyed because of its great pride and self-reliance. Israel is Tyre’s spiritual sister, judged by God for her great idolatry. Her great wealth was, in reality, her spiritual poverty.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, *which amounts to idolatry*. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come. (Col 3:5–6)

18:19 “And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’

It was the *merchants* who benefited from Israel’s idolatry. It was the *ship masters* and their vessels that facilitated that wealth. The Great Harlot sat on many waters—“peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” (17:15) Since the *waters* are peoples of the earth, it follows that the *ships* represent a distribution of Jerusalem’s influence throughout Asia Minor:

The *nations* rumble on like the rumbling of *many waters*, but He will rebuke them and they will

flee far away, and be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, or like whirling dust before a gale. (Isa 17:13)

While it may be difficult to see through all of the symbolism, things are made clearer in the passages below. Israel was to be judged by God for not repenting. The loss of her children (God's people) is shown in several places.

Then you will say in your heart, "Who has begotten these for me, since I have been bereaved of my children, and am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; from where did these come?" (Isa 49:21)

Thus says the Lord God, "Because they say to you, 'You are a devourer of men and have bereaved your nation of children...'" (Eze 36:13)

I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy My people; they did not repent of their ways. (Jer 15:7)

This winnowing (judgment) equated to bereavement (loss) "at the gates of the land." The crop was harvested, but only to their loss, not gain. Jesus also spoke of this prediction: "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:17)

"My people" (the Jews—the Great Harlot) did not repent of their ways. Both men and their centers of power were under condemnation.

Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, *because they did not repent*. (Matt 11:20)

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, *did not repent* of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. (Rev 9:20)

They did not repent of their murders, sorcery, immorality, or thefts. (Rev 9:21)

Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and *they did not repent*, so as to give Him glory. (Rev 16:9)

...they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and *they did not repent* of their deeds. (Rev 16:11)

Israel's unrepentant attitude is old news in scripture, extending down to the times of Jesus and the apostles. Amos writes,

"People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, *yet you have not returned to me*," declares the Lord.

"Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew.

Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, *yet you have not returned to me,*” declares the Lord.

“I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, *yet you have not returned to me,*” declares the Lord.

“I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, *yet you have not returned to me,*” declares the Lord.

“Therefore (since you have not returned to Me) this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you: *Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.*” (Amos 4:8-12). (NIV)

The question remains as to the significance of these ships and ship masters carrying *supplies*. Remember that in the New Heaven and Earth, “there is no longer any sea.” (Rev 21:1) That obviously prevents ships from plying their trade. However, just as the sea is a symbol for Gentile nations, so too are the ships a symbol for men’s devices:

Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes shall see Jerusalem an undisturbed habitation, a tent which shall not be folded, its stakes shall never be pulled up nor any of its cords be torn apart. But there the majestic One, the Lord, shall be for us a place of rivers and wide canals, *on which no boat with oars shall go, and on which no mighty ship shall pass*—For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us—*Your tackle hangs slack; it cannot hold the base of its mast firmly, nor spread out the sail*. Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided; the lame will take the plunder. And no resident will say, “I am sick”; the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity. (Isa 33:20–24)

This is obvious reference comparing God’s deliverance to man’s inventions. It’s not speaking of literal ships. The ships plying the waters (nations) are compared to God, as *judge, lawmaker, and king*. Note the comparison between the Harlot’s clothes and the ship’s flag and sails:

Your sail was of *fine embroidered linen* from Egypt (the world) so that it became your distinguishing mark; *your awning was blue and purple* from the coast lands of Elishah. The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; *your wise men...were aboard; they were your pilots*. The *elders* of Gebal and her *wise men* were with you *repairing your seams*; all the ships of the sea and their sailors were with you in order to deal in your merchandise. (Ezek 27:7–9)

We see then, not only judges, lawgivers, and kings, but now, *elders* and *wise men*. These are those *maintaining* a system described as a merchant ship plying the nations. Their *wealth* is described as being opposed to God, being the works of their hands. (*They did not repent of their deeds.*) In other words, they were constructing a “New Jerusalem” with their own hands. This is the beast rising up from the nations. The following verse illustrates an interesting and subtle comparison:

The centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. (Acts 27:11)

The centurion (nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues) was not influenced by what the apostle had to say, but by the advice of a *ship master*. The result of the captain not listening to Paul was a shipwreck.

So too does reliance on human invention result in spiritual disaster.

Fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered *shipwreck* in regard to their faith. (1 Tim 1:18–19)

In one hour she has been laid waste: Literally, *at that time* Jerusalem met her fate. This is repeated in verse 8: “For this reason, *in one day her plagues will come*, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.” (See notes on 3:10 and 18:8)

18:20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”

This judgment is made in behalf of saints, apostles and prophets, those martyred for the cause of the Gospel. Similar announcements are found in Revelation, all referring to Jerusalem:

The nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants *the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name*, the small and the great, and to those who destroy the earth. (Rev 11:18)

The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they poured out the *blood of saints and prophets*, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” (Rev 16:4–6)

In her (Jerusalem) was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth. (Rev 18:24)

Speaking against Jerusalem, Jesus’ words are here considered:

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, “I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, *may be charged against this generation*, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, *it shall be charged against this generation.*” (Luke 11:49–51)

Not against the generation living in the far distant future, but against the generation of Jews alive at the time of the apostles. The significance of the saints, prophets and apostles is seen as God’s temple, which replaced the OT temple of sacrifice:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but *you are fellow citizens with the saints*, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19–22)

Old Jerusalem's judgment resulted in the establishment of the New Jerusalem, giving cause for rejoicing by those who had anticipated the coming kingdom. Just because most of the apostles and many Christians were executed in Rome doesn't mean that this is the city spoken of. The Judaizers instigated this persecution, deceiving the Roman authorities into believing that the Christians were opposed to Caesar. They had used the same ploy with Pilate, telling the governor that Jesus claimed to be a king. Now, the Christians were following a king, though it was not Caesar. So although Rome may have been the instrument of many Christian's deaths, it was Jerusalem's religious leaders who pioneered the persecution, using Rome as their tool.

18:21 And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.

Strong angel: This is the last of three strong angels, or *powerful messengers*. The first one appears in 5:2, asking, "Who is worthy to open the book with the seven seals?" The second strong angel proclaims the Gospel. (10:1) This third one proclaims and demonstrates the degree of God's judgment upon Israel.

Great millstone: A weight too heavy for man to lift by his own power. No human means could resurrect the nation. Thus, the stone is the symbol, and John attributes to this stone the same nature of a heavy and large grinding stone. Jesus used the millstone in one of his soliloquies as an inexorable weight that would surely drag a person to the bottom of the sea. (Luke 17:1-2)

Threw it into the sea: The nation of Israel was returned to the nations of the world from where it originated. The beast who rose from the sea is cast back into the sea.

18:22 "And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer;

These verses describe the total desolation taking place after Jerusalem's downfall, all of them allegories. Four of them relate to music, two to employment, followed by light, celebration, and buying and selling. It reflects our Lord's words concerning the end of Jerusalem, and accurately represents the condition of today's society:

Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:26-30)

Sound of harpists: The sounds of reassurance and comfort (see notes on 14:2).

Sound of musicians: Facilitators of celebration, rejoicing and worship. David was a skillful musician. (1 Sam 16:18) Music was played for dancing and celebration. (Luke 15:25) The lack of

music symbolized sadness and trouble. (Lam 5:14) Musicians played in worship and praise to God. (1 Chr 15:16; 2 Chr 7:6; Psa 92:3) Music was also played in battle. (Isa 30:32) Thus, musicians seemed to be those artistic agents who lubricated the emotions for special events.

Sound of flute-players: Those who provided an atmosphere of festivity and celebration. History tells us that the flute was associated with fertility cults and was considered appropriate only in a secular setting to show both ecstatic joy and deep sorrow. The flute is mentioned in connection with the temple only in Psalms 150:4.

Sound of trumpeters: Those who signaled a call to assembly, or warned of attack and alarm. The trumpet was used by the priests during services of sacrifice, especially to signal the Day of Atonement. (Lev 25:9) (See notes on 1:10)

It's notable that four groups—all musicians—are defined as *positive* elements. This *absence* of music adds flavor to the punishment God meted out on Jerusalem. In other words, the *lack* of music implies a *negative* condition. The lack of instrumental music in the Church of Christ (CoC) is similar, driving people away. At this time, most CoC congregations have disappeared, but they staunchly maintain their position that instrumental music is an unforgivable sin.

No craftsmen of any kind: Those skilled in the fabrication and manufacture of goods. However, the seven times the word appears in the OT, it always relates to the manufacturing of idols. The plural form (craftsmen) appears 11 times in the OT, but only 2 refer to making idols. In the NT, the word appears only in Revelation. When the Gospel was spreading, the conversion of many to Christianity had a negative economic impact in the communities, enraging the craftsmen whose livelihood depended on the manufacture of such images. (Acts 19:20–41)

Sound of a mill: Mills produced flour for baking. No flour meant no bread for sacrificing or consumption. This would ultimately cause a hunger for the people. This could be in reference to the bread that provides spiritual nourishment (See notes on 6:6)

All of these refer to a total lack of life and activity. Jerusalem would be utterly brought to spiritual bankruptcy.

18:23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.

Light of a lamp: No more spiritual guidance would be forthcoming from the Jews, having lost their place of esteem forever. Jesus referred to John the Baptist as being a lamp (John 5:35), referring to spiritual illumination. The eyes are lamps of the body, which if dark, plunge a person into sin. (Luke 11:34) God's word is lamp to guide mankind through the darkness. (Psa 119:105)

Voice of the bridegroom and bride: Connected with happiness and joy. (Jer 16:9; 25:10) The bride was a cause for rejoicing. (Isa 62:5) In Revelation, the bride is the church. John the Baptist said, "the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." (John 3:29) Jesus told his disciples, "the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day." (Mark 2:20) Judah and Jerusalem were to become

desolation and waste, no longer hearing the voice of the bridegroom. (Jer 33:10–11)

Merchants: We find the meaning of who these peddlers are—the great men of the earth—leaders, princes, kings, and so forth. (See notes on 18:3) Note:

The kings of the earth and *the great men*...hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” (Rev 6:15–16)

This same metaphor is found in Hosea 10:8 and in Luke 23:30.

All the nations were deceived by your sorcery: Instead of being the light of the world, they pulled a curtain of deceit over the earth, smiting the sun, moon and stars so that men of all nations could not see the True God. This cancer continues to spread today. Wearing or not wearing certain clothes has nothing to do with getting right with God. Abstinence from certain foods, legalism, and pious nonsense are all touted as the “true” way to God. A church and what it practices, good or bad, does not constitute the means of salvation. This was the Pharisees’ trap, where ceremonies and rituals were esteemed above having a pure heart. Doing or *not* doing XYZ doesn’t make one right or wrong with God. It is the motivations, desires and priorities of the person—the heart—that matters.

If you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—*according to the commandments and doctrines of men?* (Col 2:20-22)

It was not the Pharisees’ *methods* that Jesus condemned, but their *interpretations*. Seeking to align God’s law with the corrupt desires of their hearts, they searched for loopholes, circumventing it to accommodate their lusts. Because they approached God’s word with an unrepentant heart, they were unable to see its true meaning, for which Jesus called them “blind.”

18:24 “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”

Jerusalem (see notes on 16:6 and 17:6)

All who have been slain on the earth: This does not mean every person ever born. (See notes on 13:6 for a discussion of ‘all’ and other terms.)

This chapter describes the Jews’ attempt at creating their own system of righteousness by works and their negative influence over the world as a result. This was diametrically opposed to God’s plan for the world. The ships and merchants are metaphors describing *spiritual* commerce and *spiritual* trade to promote a works-based salvation. They are all *builders* of their own empire, and by their actions, rejected Christ as part of their blueprint. He was the stone that those same builders rejected.

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God...” Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.” (1 Pet 2:4–6)

This Stone was “laid in Zion,” and the Jews rejected Him. Consequently, their eviction as Zion’s inhabitants was necessary. It was for this reason that the saints, apostles and prophets could rejoice. The New Jerusalem was about to be constructed, as we shall see in the remaining chapters.