

Revelation 18:20-24 - A Judgment that Makes Christians Rejoice

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You will now see a change in Christ's revelation to John. Our Lord Jesus spent much time so far showing the judgment that Israel deserved, the severity of that judgment, and the confirmation of that judgment – even by peoples of the world (monarchs 君主, merchants, and mariners). It was a done deal. It was the end of Israel as representative head of the church. With judgment reaffirmed, Jesus then began to show how he expected Christians, his new Bride, to respond to his judgment on his former Bride. This judgment, with its suddenness, severity, and completeness, might not fit our modern sensibilities of tolerance and our “live and let live” attitude, but God is not bound by man's expectations of him. God does what is best in his eyes...

Our headings are: Judgment of the Jews – Joy to the World, and Judgment of the Jews – Written in Stone.

Our goals are: That as children of Christ by blood and baptism, that you will pray for and rejoice when God's brings judgment against his enemies, knowing that you exist for his glory.

Judgment on the Jews – Joy to the World

20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

1. The Monarchs, the merchants, and the mariners mourned when they saw the destruction of Jerusalem They saw the severity, suddenness, and completeness of her destruction. And that was striking to them. But they also mourned because they personally were going to suffer as a result of that judgment. But how were Christians to respond to this full destruction of Jerusalem? The Christians were called to **respond with joy**.
2. Were they really to respond with joy? Was that appropriate? Yes, it was appropriate. They were not to respond with joy because they took revenge, but because Christ took revenge on his enemies. (They hated Christ so they persecuted Christ's children.) Christ's vengeance would **result in the Christians' protection**. Because of their protection they would **glorify the Lord**. So you may rightly rejoice in God's justice on those who hate him. Jesus himself had earlier said that praying for judgment was a part of the Christian's life...even for judgment on Jerusalem – the holy mountain of God. (This was the context...Israel the fig tree.)
Matthew 21:21 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done.
3. The fact is, the persecuted Christians had actually prayed for God's judgment on Jerusalem and now it happened. Literally the text says: "God has judged your judgment. You judged the Jews guilty and God agreed and took revenge for you." God judged the Christians' prayer was a right prayer and he honored it. You can even say that Jerusalem's destruction was the clear judgment of the Saints against Jerusalem. You must never forget the intensity of the Jewish persecution of Christians, the Bride of Christ, and how they also actively instigated 鼓动 the Roman persecution of Christians also, often falsely accusing Christians of law breaking. So when the Jews were consumed by fire and the saints rejoiced in God's justice.
4. And the church in heaven and the church on earth rejoiced. The dead saints, who were murdered in the far past (prophets) and recent past (apostles) by the Jews, joined with the Christians who were presently experiencing persecution from the Jews to rejoice that justice fully came upon the Jews.
5. For the church today to triumph in its task, she must make proper judgment based on what she sees, she must diligently pray for the defeat of her enemies – either by destruction or conversion, and she must rejoice at God's justice. This is extremely critical since you have been assured that the world is doomed to perish and the church is bound to triumph. You have the promise. Pray that it be fulfilled.

Judgment on the Jews – Written in Stone -Irrevocable 不能改变的

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

1. In the revolutions presently taking place in Moslem countries, people have to take sides, but some are nervous about the sides they take. For example, if one sided with a dictator 独裁者 like Gaddafi in Libya and then he finally wins in the battle, the one who sided against him could expect his revenge. On the other hand, if one spoke up against the Moslem Brotherhood – the side mostly fighting against these governments, and they largely win control of these

countries, then you can expect severe repercussion when they get power. This truly makes people nervous. Knowing this tendency to exact revenge on the losers, God gave Christians the certainty and reassurance that they will win and therefore can rejoice. He wanted them to know for sure that the wicked Jews would never be able to persecute them. Let's examine the certainty of that judgment that will cause Christians to rejoice.

2. Israel would be like a millstone tossed into the sea...not a creek...or river...but the sea. And Israel would sink - never to be found again. Remember the certainty of this millstone analogy 类比! This was a graphic picture of God's judgment. The one who hurt the innocent was threatened this way!

Mathew 18:6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

There is also a similar picture of judgment on Egyptians for their wickedness:

Exodus 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! **4** Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. **5** The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone. **10** You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

This was the similar language used against the old Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, **62** "then you shall say, 'O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.' **63** "Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. **64** "Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe 大灾难 that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

22 "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. **23** "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery 巫术 all the nations were deceived.

3. The question then might be asked: How come Jerusalem is still standing today and there are musicians, etc, there? Surely this must be speaking of an end of times prophecy. Answer: Jerusalem was completely destroyed in AD70, but this curse was not simply a destruction of a place...but rather...a destruction of a system. The covenant with Israel was terminated. What a terrible curse!

Consider also that God used similar language that seemed to speak of total physical annihilation 毁灭 of a nation but was also using it in the covenantal sense. All the covenant people would cease to exist. Consider God's judgment against Edom, Jacob's blood and covenant brother:

Isaiah 34: 9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. **10** It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever.

This strong language was intended to evoke 唤起 an image of Sodom and Gomorrah burning in judgment for failure to follow the path of faith. It wasn't intended to teach total physical annihilation. The land of Edom (not the country) still exists today with plants and flowers but they have no covenant with Jehovah God anymore.

4. Look at the covenant consequences!

a. **There would be no music** (for a time) and music is permanently gone in the sense of temple worship.

Jeremiah 7:34 "Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate. (See also 16:9, Ezekiel 28:11-19)

b. **There would be no labor.** This blessing of the Garden of Eden will be removed. The grinding

of the mill was a symbol of life and prosperity. But the mills would be silent.

c. **There would be no more light in the temple – a light that continued burning day and night.** You can also understand this figuratively. Israel, who was constantly described as the light to the world, would be in pure total darkness. There would no more discernment of truth and no more proclamation of truth.

d. **There would be no more marriage.** Human marriages would stop for a time. But figuratively, it is the spiritual marriage between Christ and his covenant people that is in view. Christ's marriage to the Scarlet Harlot would end. He would take a new bride. Eze 16. The bride that was bloody and battered, then saved and cleaned, would now be set aside because she returned to her former life of prostitution.

e. **There would be no more business...They labored for the things of the world, labor would be stopped** and all the things they achieved in this world would be reduced to nothing.

Jeremiah 25:10 'Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. (See also Isaiah 24:7)

Figuratively, Christ was saying that there would no longer be the trading of souls. This was spiritual language. Look at the text: Christ was speaking of the deceiving of the nations by trade – trading the souls of men by lies. Certainly this is spiritual. Did this happen?

Matthew 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Revelation 18: "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

The priests to the nations, Israel, ordained with the Word of God, had caused the nations of the world to be deceived. How? By showing them the wrong view of God's demands. They taught a "talking" fulfillment of God's law rather than a "heart" fulfillment.

24 "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

5. **While all of these things would be missing in Israel, the blood of the saints would be testimony against** the residents of Babylon. This verse confirms that this Harlot, Babylon, was Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!

Stephen reaffirmed this in Acts 7:51-54. The Roman church did not kill prophets. It is one of the reasons to prove that the Roman church is not the Harlot as many assert today.

Conclusion:

The church in heaven and the church on earth rejoice that their prayers were answered and God judged the persecutor of his people – the Scarlet Harlot. To encourage confident rejoicing, God described an irrevocable (written in stone) judgment on the Jews. The Christians' joy would be real and none could take that joy away. They could then go about their task of evangelizing the world, spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. Jesus loved you so much that he killed to protect you. Rejoice in that love that was seen in justice. 2. You are expected to return love. You do so by working for him – in thoughts, words, and life. 3. And even that labor that you offer to him is rewarded by God. 1Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 4. The best work you can do for God is worship. So worship him with truth and passion. 5. But when worship is lacking evangelism is necessary. You have work to do.

Finally, if God's judgment were so severe on those who were once his friends, how much more won't he exercise judgment on the ones who always were his enemy? But that can change. God's love for you through Christ is so strong that he can change your hatred of him to love...if you ask. He does so because Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world.