

# “MOURNING WHILE ROME BURNS”

Revelation 18:9-24

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

Nero’s fiddling while Rome burned; here we see three groups standing aloof from Rome while it burned—not because they did not care, but because they feared being caught up in her ruin: Rulers (v. 10), Merchants (v. 15), and Seafarers (v. 17).

When God takes action against wicked Rome, no one can stay His hand, no one can rescue her, no one dare try. Even though God used secondary agents—the Beast and 10 horns—the judgment was His design.

Kids sometimes say of formidable opponents, “The bigger they stand, the harder they fall.” Such is truly the case here!

In this passage we note two very opposite reactions to Rome’s demise: The mourning of her allies and the rejoicing of God’s servants.

**One day Rome will burn; one day this world will burn. We inherit a kingdom that cannot burn nor be destroyed.**

### I. THE MOURNING OF ROME’S ALLIES (9-19)

#### A. The Rulers (9-10)

1. Sensual ties with Rome (9a)
2. Sorrow over smoke (9b)
- 3. Standing aloof (10)—due to fear**
4. Sad cry over the strong city (10)—great, strong; *they lose their power and security.*

#### B. The Rich (11-19)

##### 1. Merchants of the Earth (11-16)

###### a. Reason for Sorrow—no one buys their cargo

- (1) Precious stones and metals (gold, silver, precious stones, pearls)
- (2) Fine fabrics (fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet)
- (3) Costly décor (every kind of citron wood, every article of ivory, every article of costly wood, and of bronze, and of iron, and of marble)
- (4) Fragrance (cinnamon, spice, incense, perfume, frankincense)
- (5) Foods (wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat)
- (6) Animals (cattle and sheep)
- (7) Weapons (horses and chariots)
- (8) Slaves: bodies and souls

Summary of Rome’s loss:

*“The fruit of your soul’s desire has gone from you.”*

*“All things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you”*

*“Men will no longer find them.”*

###### b. Reserve—**Standing aloof (15)—due to fear**

- c. Raving (16): “Woe, woe, the great city.” “She who was clothed in fine linen and purple, and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls.”—**their wares!**

##### 2. Seafarers (17b-19)

###### a. Their identity (17)

- (1) Pilots—“shipmaster”
- (2) Passengers—“one who sails anywhere”
- (3) Sailors

(4) All associates [“as many as make their living by the sea”]

**b. Their fear (17b)—standing aloof**

c. Their grief (18-19)

(1) Dust on their heads

(2) Vocal expressions: “crying out”—2 times in 18-19; weeping, mourning

(3) Similar words as the merchants: “Woe, woe, the great city”, but adapted to **their own loss**—  
“in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth.”

II. THE REJOICING OF GOD’S SERVANTS (20-24)

A. List of those Rejoicing (20)

1. Those in Heaven—Angels

2. Those on earth

a. Saints

b. Apostles

c. Prophets

B. Reason for their rejoicing (20b): God has heard their case and judged her on their behalf. [“judged your judgment because of her”]

1. Ceremony of judgment (21): a strong angel casting a great stone—like a millstone—into the sea

a. Totality

b. Decisiveness—not be found any more

c. Quickness—thrown violently

2. Evidence of judgment (22-23); cessation of:

a. Music—patron of the arts

b. Business—craftsmen

c. Everyday life—grinding flour

d. Night life—lamplight

e. Human festivities—weddings

3. Causes for judgment (23b-24)

a. Arrogant greatness—“great men of the earth” as their merchants

b. Demonic sorceries—of wealth and influence; affected “all the nations”

c. Persecution of the saints and prophets and all the earth’s slain (24)

CONCLUSION

Value of the passage: [cf. Gen. 18:17-19—Abraham & judgment upon Sodom] *Sovereignty of God as the judge. Train our children in the Lord’s way; results in God’s blessing.*

v. 20 does not express personal vengeance.

1. Vindication of God’s righteousness

2. Extirpation of evil from the Earth

3. Salvation of God’s people

“No more at all”—**6 times** in vv. 21-23; Such is the end of the ungodly world system!

“In one hour”—10b—judgment has come; 17a—wealth laid waste; 19b—she is laid waste.

**Suddenness and completeness** of her ruin and judgment.

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