

Three Laments & the Downfall of Cartels

Revelation 18:9-20

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-05-06

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Text

9 “The kings of the earth who fornicated and lived luxuriously with her will weep and mourn over her, when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, O great city Babylon, O mighty city! Because your judgment came in one hour.’ 11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and sorrow over her because no one buys their goods anymore: 12 goods of gold and of silver, of precious stones and of pearl, of fine linen and of purple, of silk and of scarlet; every citron wood and object of ivory, every object of most precious wood and of bronze and of iron and of marble; 13 cinnamon and incense and perfume and frankincense, wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep and horses and carriages, and bodies and souls of men! 14 (‘Yes, the fruit that your soul craved has gone from you, and all the sumptuous and splendid things have perished from you, and you will never find them again!’) 15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand afar off for fear of her torment, weeping and sorrowing 16 and saying, ‘Alas, alas, O great city! that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; 17 because in one hour such great wealth was laid waste.’ “And every ship captain, and all who travel by ship—sailors and as many as work the sea—stood afar off 18 and cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘Who is like the great city!?’ 19 They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and sorrowing and saying, ‘Alas, alas, O great city! by which all who had ships in the sea became rich, by her costly abundance; because in one hour she was laid waste.’

Introduction

Fernando Aguirre wrote a survival book that narrates how he got through incredibly tough times in Argentina during their 2001 economic collapse.¹ He said that it was impossible to get your money out of a bank, stores closed, people who were going hungry were looting and rioting. Everything came to a standstill except for the looters. It was a pretty scary time. And it is a fascinating first hand account of what can happen to a country’s political stability, its merchants, and its transportation system during an economic meltdown.

Well, this chapter describes those three things during a far more severe economic meltdown that happened in AD 70. And the main lessons learned are encapsulated in three symbolic lamentations. Verses 9-10 give the lamentation of the kings of the land, verses 11-17a give the lamentation of the merchants of the land (and specifically the statist merchants who had been in bed with the Sadducees), and verses 17b-19 give the lamentation of the merchant marines, or the transportation network. All three of those

1 Fernando Aguirre, [The Modern Survival Manual](#) (nc: Fernando Aguirre, 2009).

groups had benefited enormously from the Sadducees' political corruption, and all three were devastated by God's judgment. A lot of them continued to live, but they lost a lot.

I. The lament of kings over Jerusalem's destruction (vv. 9-10)

The first lament is said to be that of the kings of the earth and verse 9 gives us a little information about them that helps to rule out contending theories of who these kings are. Verse 9 says, "The kings of the earth who fornicated and lived luxuriously with her will weep and mourn over her, when they see the smoke of her burning..."

A. Identity of these kings

Simple logic tells us that these kings of the earth can't be the Sadducees. The Sadducees were at least part of what constituted the harlot, but these kings fornicate with the harlot, so obviously they are different from the harlot. So we can rule out the wealthy Sadducean rulers. They were not the kings that are intended here.

But neither can these kings be the ten kings in chapter 17:16, as some people think. We know this for three reasons. First, verse 9 says that these kings mourn over the destruction of this harlot, whereas the ten kings rejoice at her destruction and hate her. Those are quite different attitudes. And even futurist commentators recognize that this means that these kings are quite different from the ten kings of the empire.² Another difference is that the ten kings were said to be kings of the οἰκουμένης (the Greek word for the whole empire), whereas these kings are said to be kings of the γῆς (the Greek word used in this book for land of Israel). So if you substitute the word "land" for each time the word "earth" occurs, you will get the idea. And then third, these kings lost a lot of revenue when the harlot was destroyed.

Now, it is true that there was an empire-wide economic collapse that happened as a result of this war. So it is true that even the ten kings had some losses. But this passage is mostly focused on those who could actually see Jerusalem burning from a distance. And each of the three groups are somehow connected to the land.

Well, that narrows down the identity of the kings to two more groups (or perhaps both of these groups together). Some apply this phrase to the priests

² Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 331.

who had seized power from Rome in AD 66, and who became generals fighting against Rome. The Greek term “kings”³ could refer to them since they divided up the land of Israel among themselves and at least some of them became rulers over various districts.⁴ One of those kings would include Josephus, who ruled over Galilee until he was captured by the Romans. In his history of the Wars, Josephus records the way he wept when he saw the temple and the city going up in flames. So if it was these Jewish usurper kings, we have evidence that it would fit rather perfectly.

The last theory is that this is referring to the Roman allied rulers of the land who had benefited so enormously from the political prostitution with the Sadducees. Each of them had received tens of millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks. This would include Herod Agrippa II, who though he fought on Titus’ side, saw his palace and all of his comforts being destroyed. He lost a lot. And he certainly lost the ability to gain further income from the Sadducees. He would have every reason to be grieved. He had poured his life into that temple. That temple was his pride and joy. The whole war tore him up. Josephus records one time when he wept publicly.

But the reference to kings might also would include Queen Berenice, who though she had an affair with Titus and gained in that way, she also saw her palace and everything she owned going up in flames. We have evidence from Josephus that she too was very grieved. And this economic loss would have hurt her immensely. In fact, much of her wealth may be have been lost.

This might even have included two procurators who had a lot of possessions in Israel even after their procuratorship. The first one, Gessius Florus, was the procurator of Judea from 64-66. Many people attribute his tyrannical actions as the reason why the war was started. But we know that he gained tens of millions of dollars from the Sadducees, and that golden faucet was now turned off. In any case, even though he lost his procuratorship in AD 66, he still had a lot invested in Israel. The second procurator was Marcus Antonius Julianus, who replaced Florus from AD 66-70, and who lost his procuratorship at the end of this war. All of these people had a lot invested in Israel.

3 See NIDNTT, under “βασιλεύς.”

4 In Josephus’ Wars 2:20,4, he says that the ten generals (and the regions they commanded) were: 1. Joseph, the son of Gorion (Governor of Jerusalem) 2. Ananus, the high priest (Governor of Jerusalem) 3. Jesus, the son of Sapphias, one of the high priests (Idumaea) 4. Eleazar, the son of Ananias, the high priest (Idumaea) 5. Niger, the then governor of Idumea (Idumaea) 6. Joseph, the son of Simon (Jericho) 7. Manasseh (Perea) 8. John, the Esscue (toparchy of Thamna; “Lydda was also added to his portion, and Joppa, and Emmaus”) 9. John, the son of Matthias (toparchies of Gophnitica and Acrabattene) 10. Josephus, the son of Matthias (both the Galilees; “Gamala also, which was the strongest city in those parts, was put under his command”)

B. The kings of the land will 1) see temple and Jerusalem burn and 2) will mourn the loss (v. 9)

And verse 9 says that these kings actually witnessed the burning from a distance. It says, “The kings of the earth who fornicated and lived luxuriously with her will weep and mourn over her, when they see the smoke of her burning...” So these kings could not have been much further away than Joppa. The mariners were probably in Joppa or a closer harbor, but the kings were likely even closer.

But the point is that those who misuse the system are now mourning because Jerusalem (the city that had made them enormously wealthy) was now history. And as we will see shortly, their central bank was completely looted. Whatever investments they had put into this international bank were now gone. Even the power brokers of this world have limits to what they can control. Even the wealthy kings can be slapped down by the Lord. All of them had a lot of wind taken out of their sails.

C. The kings of the land will distance themselves from Jerusalem (v. 10a)

Verse 10 says, “standing afar off.” Herod Agrippa II had to distance himself from Jerusalem in order to stay in Rome’s good graces. He was a torn man - he didn’t want to lose Jerusalem, but he didn’t want to lose Rome either. And he decided to stick with Rome. Josephus shows that he was very literally standing afar off. But metaphorically that was true too. He did continue to rule Judea under Rome until the 90s. But he lost a lot. And he certainly lost the respect of the Jews. They hated him for what he had done.

Josephus, who was the ruler of Galilee literally watched from afar off as Jerusalem burned. He too was alienated from the Jews, and though Titus gave him a fabulous estate in Israel as a reward, he didn’t dare to return to Israel to enjoy it, choosing instead to live in Vespasian’s former residence at Rome.

D. The kings of the land be made nervous by her judgment (v. 10b)

Verse 10 gives as the reason for them standing afar off that they were made afraid by what happened to Jerusalem and temple: “standing afar off for fear of her torment.” Perhaps for the first time they realized how vulnerable they really were.

E. The kings of the land will recognize that this was God's judgment (v. 10c)

Verse 10 even mentions that they recognize that this was God's hand of judgment, so there may have even been some fear of God. It continues: "saying, 'Alas, alas, O great city Babylon, O mighty city! Because your judgment came in one hour.'" We already saw that those in the secret societies who were in the know explicitly identified with Babylon - and Babylonian images were inserted into the temple, which I will show later had become the most impregnable bank in the world.

But by using the word "judgment" they also must have seen God's hand in this. We know that both Berenice and Agrippa recognized that this was from God. And Josephus in many places recognized that this was God's hand of judgment. Let me quote him exactly. He said, "this was the effect of God's anger against us for our manifold sins." (War 7:332) He called Jews to repentance, "...if only you would appease the anger of God who was the author of your destruction." (War 5:19). He paints a picture of an indestructible city and temple being destroyed so easily, that only God's judgment could account for it. And he indicates that others thought similarly. So again, there is a perfect fulfillment of every word.

Of course, we have seen that two prophets had been warning of this day for years. And Josephus records another prophet who constantly shouted that God's judgments were about to fall upon the land. When it actually came, they could hardly deny that it came from God.

F. What seemed permanent ended up not being permanent (v. 10c)

So what seemed like a metaphorical goose that could permanently lay golden eggs for these kings turned out to suddenly be gone. I'll draw some applications at the end of the sermon, but let's go to the lament of the land-merchants.

II. The lament of the land-merchants (vv. 11-17a)

A. The merchants will mourn because they have lost the lucrative trade of temple and capital (v. 11)

Verse 11 says that they mourn because they have lost the lucrative trade of the temple and capital. "And the merchants of the earth weep and sorrow over her because no one buys their goods anymore..." We had seen in a

previous sermon that these merchants were in bed with the Sadducees and had used the power of the state to enrich themselves. And the temple was one of the biggest government projects that allowed favored merchants to charge exorbitant prices.

But even apart from that, the Sadducees had a system going for a couple hundred years that had made Jerusalem have an enormous number of extremely wealthy people. Tacitus speaks of “boundless riches,” and where there are boundless riches, there is the opportunity to spend. Joachim Jeremias says that that province “was the equal of Egypt, as far as commerce and industry was concerned, among the provinces of the Roman Empire,”⁵ and most of that commerce flowed through Jerusalem. To be equal to Egypt is an astounding flow of commerce.

But with millions of people coming to Jerusalem for the seven pilgrimages and even for the ongoing temple sacrificial system, there was money to be made in every part of the city. It was like one gigantic mall where anything in the world could be bought and sold. And the merchants lost that.

But what must have been most grieving to them was the billions of dollars of goods that were needlessly burned. Josephus says, “They also burnt down the treasury chambers, in which was an immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments, and other precious goods, there reposit[ed]; and to speak all in a few words, there it was that the entire riches of the Jews were heaped up together, while the rich people had there built themselves chambers [to contain such wealth].” (War 6:282) Josephus says that the temple acted as a bank for both the citizens and for these rich merchants. They lost a ton of their own money. There was plenty for these merchants to weep over.

And by the way, the reason why the temple was the central bank depository is that it was the most impregnable fortress on the planet at that time. The temple itself was a multi-storied building covering 35 acres, with massive walls and fortresses around it, another set of walls around that, and with Jerusalem itself being a massive fortress. So it was a fortress within a fortress. It was very secure. And I will talk about how the temple became a corrupt bank a little bit more later on. But anyone who has studied the structure of the temple knows that it was a miracle that the Romans were able to take the temple. If there hadn’t been factions fighting each other from within, it would have been impossible.

5 Joachim Jeremias, [Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1969), p. 38.

The long list of goods they sold (vv. 12-13)

But verses 12-13 gives a long list of goods that they sold.

12 goods of gold and of silver, of precious stones and of pearl, of fine linen and of purple, of silk and of scarlet; every citron wood and object of ivory, every object of most precious wood and of bronze and of iron and of marble; 13 cinnamon and incense and perfume and frankincense, wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep and horses and carriages, and bodies and souls of men!

Carrington says, “The long list of merchandise in 18:11-13 is surely a catalogue of materials for building the Temple, and stores for maintaining it.”⁶ Jesse Mills goes further and says, “Before the war of A.D. 70, Palestine was the only nation exporting all the items mentioned in the passage.”⁷ If you were looking for a city that exported all of these items, it would be Jerusalem - and he believes, Jerusalem alone. McKenzie says, “For the most part this merchandise falls into two general categories: verse 12 lists the commodities used in the furnishings of the Temple and the most sacred attire of the high priest; verse 13 lists commodities used in the Temple sacrifices and offerings.”⁸ Ford in his commentary shows how even the slaves and chariots (and the word “chariot” is a very rare word) were specifically tied to Jerusalem. Josephus mentions the anger some Jews had over the unbiblical slave trade that went on there. It clearly violated Biblical law. But there is certainly no problem in seeing these things connected with Jerusalem.

But why make such a long list of commodities? Carrington, Ford, and McKenzie say it is for two reasons. First, it made it crystal clear to first century eyes that he was talking about the temple and Jerusalem. McKenzie spends a few pages documenting item by item from the Mishna and other sources why these goods were connected tightly to the temple in first century eyes. I won't get into those technicalities.

But secondly (and more importantly), it tied this passage thematically in with Ezekiel. I have not brought up the Ezekiel connections in my sermon series very much because many of them are technical. A great deal of Revelation's structure is beautifully patterned after Ezekiel, and most commentaries recognize that. But even though I have not mentioned those connections very much, this particular one is worth bringing up and spending a bit of time on it.

6 Philip Carrington, [The Meaning of the Revelation](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), p. 287.

7 Jesse E. Mills, Jr., [Revelation: Survey and Research](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Society, 2004), p. 242. Also see Angus & Green, the *Cyclopedia Handbook to the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1853 ed.), pp. 810-813.

8 Duncan McKenzie. *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: Volume II: The Book of Revelation* (Xulon Press, 2012), p. 266.

Many commentators point out that the lament against the city of Tyre in Ezekiel 27-28 is a thematic background to this passage, and it mentions how critically important that banking center was to Satan's kingdom. I have mentioned in the past that Satan's throne was not normally in the political centers of an empire, as one might have assumed. He often left those centers to other strongmen. In chapter 2 I showed why Pergamos was Satan's throne in AD 66, and I gave the reasons why. It was a city of enormous influence. Usually Satan's throne is in the deeper centers of influence such as education and finance. But we also saw that Satan came to Palestine to aid the Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the land in trying to patch things back together again. This city of Jerusalem had enormous strategic importance to Satan.

But in any case, I pointed out previously from Ezekiel 28 that Tyre used to be Satan's throne, and it used to be the international banking center of the world. At least a hundred years earlier the Sadducees had bullied their way into that lucrative business and struck a deal with Tyre to make a banking monopoly.

So when comparing the background passage of Ezekiel 27-28 with this passage, many conclude that the lament over Tyre in Ezekiel makes Tyre yet another symbol for this city. Jerusalem has already been compared to Babylon, Sodom, and Egypt. Now it is being compared to Tyre. That much is certain; the question is, "Why?" My conclusion is that Jerusalem is being described as tied by the purse strings to the merchants and mariners of Tyre. And some recent commentators have come to the same conclusion.

McKenzie's commentary points out that this gives one more idolatrous connection that would have powerfully struck first century Jews. One of the complaints about the temple in the first century was that it was so tightly tied to Tyre and Tyrian money that it had become compromised. Godly Jews hated the fact that Caiaphas and the other Sadducees had switched the pure temple currency that had no images on the money into Tyrian money - a currency that had idolatry stamped right on it. John had already accused the temple of being full of idolatry, and we have looked at numerous idols, but this Tyrian money would have put millions of silver idols right into the temple. Joachim Jeremias points out that "in the Temple only Tyrian currency was allowed."⁹ That was a revolutionary change that the Sadducean mafia had instituted. And when you understand the reason why, so much of the background to this book begins to make sense.

⁹ Joachim Jeremias, [Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1969), p. 36.

Von Wahlde draws this amazing conclusion from Jerusalem being connected so tightly with Tyre. He says,

Money changers were necessary to convert common Roman currency into silver Tyrian coinage, the only coinage acceptable for the Temple offering . . . According to the Mishnah [which is part of the Talmud], the Temple offering was to be done in Tyrian coinage, which was silver . . . The Tyrian shekel was not aniconic [i.e., was not free of graven images] and therefore was not a neutral or “holy” coin. On the obverse it contained an image, and in fact the image of a pagan god (Melkart-Herakles); on the reverse was a Tyrian eagle and the inscription “Tyre, the holy and inviolable.” This would make the Tyrian half-shekel inherently offensive, at least to more devout Jews, and especially as a Temple offering. According to this argument, rather than change the law requiring silver coins [for the offering], the authorities allowed the use of the Tyrian silver shekel, bowing to political and economic considerations.¹⁰

He says this was done because they were “bowing to political and economic considerations.” This was a deal that the Tyrian merchants and Sadducees had brokered. Tyre was in on the international banking, and with the temple at the center of it, was in on the monopoly. And actually, if you study the history it was Tyre who had the banking monopoly before, and it was the Sadducees who wiggled their way into the monopoly and offered the temple as the central bank. McKenzie concludes by drawing this image together with the previous chapter. He says,

Shockingly, the idolatrous currency of Tyre was the currency of the Temple.¹¹ The leaders of the Temple seemed more concerned with the purity of their silver (cf. Matt. 23:16-22) than the purity of God’s command against graven images of pagan deities!...

Let me stop reading there for a moment and explain what he means by that: There were many national currencies that were traded in Israel and throughout the Roman empire. Rome wanted to have their own money to be the monopoly, but Rome had inflated its money so much that no one trusted it. Tyrian money was accepted by all without question all across the empire because of its purity. So there were competing dollars back then just like

10 Urban C. von Wahlde, “Archeology and John’s Gospel” in *Jesus and Archeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 549-550.

11 See Gordon Franz, “The Tyrian Shekel and the Temple of Jerusalem,” *Associates for Biblical Research*, accessed June 15, 2010, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2006/11/The-Tyrian-Shekel-and-the-Temple-of-Jerusalem.aspx>. Franz describes these coins in the following manner: “The shekel, with the laureate head of Melqarth-Herakles (a pagan deity) on the obverse and an eagle (a graven image) on the reverse, averaged 14.2 gm in weight and contained at least 94 per cent silver. These coins were minted in Tyre between 126/125 BC and 19/18 BC. After the Roman government closed the Tyre mint, these coins continued to be minted at an unknown mint, probably in or near Jerusalem, from 18/17 BC until AD 69/70. The Jewish coin makers continued to strike coins with the image of Melqarth-Herakles and the eagle. This was contrary to the clear teachings of the Word of God (Ex 20:3, 4: Dt. 4:16–18; 5:8). Yet the rabbis declared that the Tyrian shekels were the only legal currency that was acceptable in the Temple (D. Hendin, [Guide to Biblical Coins, fourth ed. (New York: Amphora] 2001):420–29; [“Tyre Coins and Graven Images” *The Celator*] 2002, [16.2], 46, 47). The rabbis decided that the commandment to give the half-shekel Temple tax, with its proper weight and purity, was more important than the prohibition of who or what image was on the coin.”

there are today. But Tyrian money, because it was most stable and because it had not been inflated, was the defacto standard. So let me read what McKenzie said again:

The leaders of the Temple seemed more concerned with the purity of their silver (cf. Matt. 23:16-22) than the purity of God's command against graven images of pagan deities! With the nationalist fervor that accompanied the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66, the image of Melkart on these coins was replaced with an image of a ritual chalice and a string of pearls. On the reverse, instead of "Tyre, the holy . . ." it now read "Jerusalem the holy."¹² Compare this with Revelation's image of the harlot being adorned with pearls, having a chalice in her hand, and the name "BABYLON THE GREAT . . ." on her forehead (Rev. 17:4-5) [He is saying that the Babylon-the-Great-image was not only shown by the Babylonian connections we looked at before, but was directly related to the Tyrian coin. He goes on:]

...there is no question that there were idols in its treasury — millions of little silver ones. Sanders notes that "the widespread use of the Tyrian coinage in Palestine shows that the temple's requirement reversed the doctrine that bad money drives out good and also overcame the general dislike of coins with images of people or deities. This gives a good idea of the temple's 'clout'."¹³ It is also a good example of the inhabitants of the land being "made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. 17:2). Dan Bahat, quoting the Tosefta (Kethuboth 13:20), notes that "Tyrian money was so invested in life in Judah that 'Whenever the Torah says money, then it is Tyrian money, and what is Tyrian money? Tyrian money is Jerusalemite [money].'"¹⁴

So let me sum up the significance of John using Ezekiel's lament against Tyre as the symbol of this new lament against Jerusalem. Jerusalem was joined at the hip with Tyre - which makes sense of the third lament - that of the merchant marines. But what a symbol! - the temple's holiness was now being defined in pagan terms. Millions of silver coins in the temple had imprinted on them, "Tyre, the holy and inviolable." Money had become an idol for the kings and merchants and even the temple that those kings and merchants had prostituted themselves with had a holiness that was Tyrian in origin, not Biblical. It highlights why the temple system was a harlot. So hopefully chapter by chapter you are getting a fuller picture of the corruption that had been happening.

With the collapse of the economic system, the merchants lost everything (v. 14)

Well, with the collapse of the banking system, the merchants lost everything. Verse 14 says, "(Yes, the fruit that your soul craved has gone from you, and

12 Marcia A. Ciccone, "The Role of Coins in the First Revolt," accessed June 17, 2010, <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~ciccone/html/differentiating%20the%20shekels.htm>.

13 McKenzie cites Sanders, *Judaism*, 243.

14 McKenzie cites Dan Bahat, "Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount" in *Jesus and Archeology*, 306.

all the sumptuous and splendid things have perished from you, and you will never find them again!’)” They had invested so heavily in this statist plan that when the Sadducee rulers went down, the merchants went down with them. When the temple, which was their impregnable banking fortress, was destroyed, so too were the merchants. And Edersheim documents the enormous amount of merchandise that had previously flowed through Jerusalem.¹⁵

The merchants too will distance themselves from Jerusalem (v. 15a)

So this means that in order for the merchants to survive, they too will have to distance themselves from Jerusalem. Verse 15 says, “The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand afar off...” There is no way that they will risk their necks for Jerusalem. All economic ties were now off. They stand afar off. They are kind of helpless as they watch this economic collapse evaporate their wealth.

The merchants too will be made nervous by her judgment (v. 15b)

And they too were made nervous by her judgment: “will stand afar off for fear of her torment...” What if they had been inside Jerusalem when the Romans came? What if the Romans find out that they were in collusion with the economic corruption of the Sadducees? What if the Romans come after them? There were perhaps a lot of “What ifs” that made them nervous.

The merchants will mourn the overnight collapse of an economic empire (v. 15b-17a)

Of course, the Romans found so much wealth in the temple, and in buried caches (that were discovered by torture) that they didn’t need to go after the merchants. But the merchants still mourned the overnight collapse of a powerful economic empire that the Sadducees had built.

...weeping and sorrowing 16 and saying, ‘Alas, alas, O great city! that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stones and

15 He says, ““In these streets and lanes everything might be purchased: the production of Palestine, or imported from foreign lands – nay, the rarest articles from the remotest parts. Exquisitely shaped, curiously designed and jewelled cups, rings, and other workmanship of precious metals; glass, silks, fine linen, woolen stuffs, purple, and costly hangings; essences, ointments, and perfumes, as precious as gold; articles of food and drink from foreign lands – in short, what India, Persia, Arabia, Media, Egypt, Italy, Greece, and even the far-off lands of the Gentiles yielded, might be had in these bazaars. Ancient Jewish writings enable us to identify no fewer than 118 different articles of import from foreign lands, covering more than even modern luxury has devised.”” Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, two vols. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), Vol. 1, p. 116.

pearls; 17 because in one hour such great wealth was laid waste.’

III. The lament of the merchant-marines (vv. 17b-19)

So we have seen that 1) Jerusalem’s leadership was compromised with their dealings with Roman-appointed kings, 2) with statist merchants, and 3) thirdly with a Tyrian merchant marine. He refers to them as “...every ship captain, and all who travel by ship — sailors and as many as work the sea...” This was a vast network of merchant marines. It obviously included some Jewish shipping, and some ships from other countries, but it was likely the Tyrian shippers that were primarily in mind. From their main harbor they would have been able to see the smoke going up.

A. The merchant marines will of necessity distance themselves from Jerusalem (v. 17b)

Verse 17 says that they too had to distance themselves from Jerusalem and play up their trade with Rome to avoid danger. Verse 17 continues with the words they “stood afar off.”

B. The merchant marines are staggered by Jerusalem’s fall; it is their greatest loss (v. 18)

But though they will change sides, they are still staggered at the loss they sustained with Jerusalem’s fall. Verse 18 says, “and cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘Who is like the great city!?’”

There are some in the past who have doubted that Tyre’s merchant marines would consider Jerusalem to be the greatest city. But if the temple formed the hub of the world international banking system under the watchful eye of the Annas-Caiaphas mafia, it is not surprising that there would be massive trade sparked by their international company. The temple was the most secure fortress in the world in which the bankers could make their deposits.

The internationally recognized scholar, Joachim Jeremias said that the economic production that flowed through her “was the equal of Egypt, as far as commerce and industry was concerned, among the provinces of the Roman Empire.”¹⁶ For Jerusalem to have as much commerce going through it as went through Egypt is staggering. Ford said, Carrington refers to Titus striking a medal with the words “Victoria Navalis.” It referred to Jerusalem as a second Carthage...¹⁷ That too is a staggering comparison. In any case,

16 Joachim Jeremias, [Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1969), p. 38.

17 J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, vol. 38, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 306.

the Tyre-Jerusalem-banking-business partnership was a massive venture that negatively impacted the entire empire when Jerusalem fell. If the banking system goes down, many suffer with it. And we have seen this illustrated in country after country in the last one hundred years. But the dangers surrounding this economic collapse led to Rome imposing martial law and micromanaging the economy for the next three and a half years.

C. The merchant marines will mourn the loss of the “goose that laid their golden egg” (v. 19)

Verse 19 says that the merchant marines also mourn the loss of the goose that laid their golden eggs. Verse 19 says,

They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and sorrowing and saying, ‘Alas, alas, O great city! by which all who had ships in the sea became rich, by her costly abundance; because in one hour she was laid waste.’

The Qumran community applied Habakkuk 2:8 to the priests of Jerusalem and accused them of plundering the nations with their wicked business and financial dealings, and then went on to say, “But in the last days their riches and booty shall be delivered into the hands of the army of the Kittim.”¹⁸ That is exactly what happened. In the Qumran writings, the Kittim was a reference to Rome.¹⁹ Though they weren’t believers, they hated and despised the way the Sadducees had prostituted the temple into a massive central bank. The plundering international bankers got plundered. It was a lex talionis judgment from God - what they had done to others was now done to them.

IV. Further applications

Now, if I ever get my commentary on Revelation written, I will go into more detail on this large section and expand on each point of this massive international economic collapse. It’s a very interesting topic to me, and I think it has implications for how we should prepare for a potential economic collapse in our future. But this morning I will be very brief in making five more applications.

A. We should hate statism just as much as Jesus did

The first application that we should take home from this passage is how much Jesus hates statism and that we should hate statism just as much. The kings were judged for their statism. The merchants were judged for

18 1QpHab IX as quoted in Margaret Barker, [The Revelation of Jesus Christ](#)343d9566-5e15-47e1-b336-7ea307c93bbe (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 292-293.

19 Eshel, Hanan. “The Kittim in the War Scroll and in the Pesharim Paper presented at the Fourth Orion International Symposium,” January 27–31, 1999. See *Encyclopedia Biblica*, 1899. Entry on ‘Kittim’.

benefiting from the statist system. And shipping itself suffered. It would be wrong for us to hate the loss of comforts that come with such an economic collapse more than we hate the idolatry of statism. Our passion should conform to God's passion - and that is to see all things put under the feet of King Jesus. Christ did not save us to make us comfortable. Christ saved us to join His family, to pledge allegiance to His kingship, to be ambassadors reconciling the world to Christ. It's about Christ, not us. And for sure we should not get sucked into the idolatry of our modern Military-Industrial-Complex. If it takes judgments against statism to advance Christ's kingdom, then so be it. We must hate statism as much as Jesus did. And this chapter shows that He hated it a lot.

B. We should hate Fascism and business cartels just as much as Jesus did

Second, we should hate Fascism and business cartels just as much as Jesus did. In a sense, I am saying the same thing, but I am focusing on one facet of statism. I have written four blogs that give details on what the Bible says about American Fascism and Business Cartels.²⁰ You can find them on KayserCommentary.com. But that is what had been developed by these kings, merchants, and international trade agreements. God was taking down Fascism, cartels, and a very interventionist banking system.

A cartel is simply a group of people or organizations within an industry that seeks to control production, marketing, distribution, price, and/or competition through force and intimidation. Most modern cartels seek to establish a government-licensed monopoly by getting one or more civil governments to intervene in the market in a way that will create barriers to any new competition. We see it all the time in modern nations. This government intervention can be by way of price controls, wage controls, tariffs, import quotas, compulsory trade union laws, rationing, regulation, licensing, threat of lawsuit, overseeing agencies, etc. I hope to do a lot more research and writing in the future on how the Sadducees were at the center of exactly these kinds of evils. But America is as well.

Anyway, in my four blog posts I show how Jesus considered both the banking cartel and the animal sacrifice cartel started by Caiaphas to be equivalent to a "den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13).²¹ But it is clear that this

²⁰ <https://kaysercommentary.com/Blogs/Cartels.md>

²¹ The term "den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13) may be a reference to the Zealots who supported and enforced Caiaphas' monopoly. Prior to the establishment of a banking cartel by Caiaphas in 28-30 AD, currencies from other countries could be exchanged anywhere in Israel. Prior to his sacrificial animals cartel in the temple, pure animals could be purchased in other markets.

chapter excoriated the “merchants of the land (Rev. 18:3,11), who had “become rich” (Rev. 18:15) by being in bed with “the kings of the land.” (Rev. 18:3ff) Their international companies lost a lucrative trade deal when the “city” could no longer intrude into the free market on their behalf. This chapter is a defense of a radically free market economy and is a critique of what is wrong with modern Fascism. If you just studied this chapter from an economic perspective, you would know why I consider our nation to be in deep trouble. The economics of our nation is not a minor issue. It is unlawful and evil. We should hate Fascism and business cartels just as much as Jesus did. He promises His judgments against such economic evil.

C. We can be encouraged that the Military-Industrial-Banking cartels are not almighty

The third application is that we can be encouraged that the Military-Industrial-Banking cartels are not almighty. We can be encouraged that just as the first century Military-Industrial-banking system collapsed overnight, God can take out modern conspiracies against Christ’s kingship too.

D. We should prepare for disaster (Prov. 22:3; 27:12; 21:20) while not burying our investments in the ground out of fear (Matt. 25:14-30)

The next application is to avoid two equally false extremes in terms of our reaction to this. The outline says, “We should prepare for disaster (Prov. 22:3; 27:12; 21:20) while not burying our investments in the ground out of fear (Matt. 25:14-30).” It’s easy to go to one extreme or the other. It’s easy to go off the grid and hide and no longer be an ambassador for Christ (I see that as potentially self-centered and not Christ-centered), or on the other extreme to act as if this kind of thing will never happen. One extreme completely abandons the banking system, the investment system, and life in general out of fear. The other extreme ignores the writing on the wall. Both extremes are in a sense reactionary.

Twice in Proverbs God says, “A prudent man foresees disaster and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” That’s Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12. In Proverbs 21:20 God says that the wise man has at least some treasure secured somewhere other than a bank and at least some food secured somewhere other than the grocery store. The same verse says that the foolish man spends everything he makes every week in other things. He wouldn’t have the six months of emergency available because it would all be in the system that went down. So there is a balance.

Hiding yourself doesn't mean burying your talent in the ground. Jesus was quite clear on that. In fact, Jesus said that it was OK to use the banking system, as evil as it was. He did not force his followers to get out of the system. Jesus wants us to invest our resources and grow them even during difficult times. But there was a reason that the church in Acts 2 sold properties that were going to be taken away from them shortly by the Romans. They knew that the war was imminent. Their property sales were investments that took that knowledge into account. In a sense it was insider trading.

But though it doesn't mean burying your stewardship, it does mean taking some precautions for what could happen. We shouldn't be fatalistic and say that nobody can protect against total collapse. There are at least baby steps of faith that anyone can take. Ignoring such a thing and hoping it won't happen is disobedience to those Scriptures. I think there is always something that we can do to at least moderately prepare for disaster while still investing our money for growth. Both need to happen.

E. God can preserve His people even through economic collapse

But the last application is an encouraging one - God can preserve His people even through economic collapse. We saw in the first half of the book that all of the inhabitants of an entire region near Pella were wiped out by race riots in AD 66. Though it was something to mourn over (man's inhumanity to man), God used that Satanic massacre to prepare a place for the 144,000 believing Jews. Second, we saw that God sent His warrior angels to keep demons out of that region, so even Satan did not know the 144,000 were living there. Third, we saw that the houses and the wealth of those who perished was given to the 144,000 by King Herod Agrippa II. Herod was a strange mix of good and bad characteristics. For some reason he protected Christians during the first half of the war. So the 144,000 inherited the houses, food, money, and other stores that had been left behind after the race riots between the Jews and Gentiles. The wealth of the wicked was stored up for the righteous. They might have grieved at the stuff they were leaving behind as they fled the city, but God provided for them.

In other ages God has preserved His people in other remarkable ways. But we need not face the future with fear. We can face it with confidence in our God's providential control, faith in His promises, and hope in what God can do through us. May we learn to have Biblically balanced lives during difficult times. Amen.