

# Lesson 42

Last week we started Chapter 18, and we saw that Chapter 18 is a doom song for Rome that is modeled after similar doom songs in the Old Testament. Each doom song describes the ruin of a great city using vivid, poetic language interspersed with apocalyptic speech. The doom song in this chapter is describing the fall of Rome. It began in verse 2, which we studied last week, and we will pick up with verse 3 this week.

## **Revelation 18:3**

**3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.**

Rome was a great military and commercial power, and Rome enticed other nations to follow her wicked example. Rome was powerful and arrogant, and Rome openly boasted about her abominations.

We are reminded of Isaiah's description of the arrogant boasting and haughty pride of the king of Assyria.

*Isaiah 10:13-14 — For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.*

And do you remember what Nebuchadnezzar said?

**Daniel 4:30** — *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?*

That boast almost sounds like it came from the front page of today's newspaper! But the next thing that great king heard in verse 31 was this: "The kingdom is departed from thee."

Rome had the same attitude as that Assyrian king in Isaiah 10 and as Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, and Rome suffered the same fate.

**Proverbs 16:18** — *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

The reference in verse 3 to the "merchants of the earth" is important. As we like to say today, if you want to understand something, then just follow the money. And if you followed the money in the first century, you would end up in Rome.

It was Roman money that kept the emperors in power because it was Roman money that allowed the emperors to keep the army happy, and no emperor ruled very long when the army wasn't happy.

It was Roman money that fueled the fires of Rome's power and of Rome's persecution of the church, and so God is including the merchants of Rome in this judgment of Rome. Those merchants might have thought it was just business, but God did not see it that way.

Rarely in our own country have we seen such unbridled greed as we saw in the 1920's just prior to the Great Depression. In fact, that greed was in large part responsible for the Great Depression. And did you know that we can draw a straight line from that greed in the United States to the atrocities of Hitler in Germany? Hitler came to power because of the worldwide economic turmoil that followed the Great Depression.

**1 Timothy 6:10** — *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Men may think it's just business, but God does not see it that way.

**James 5:1-6** — *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are mo-*

*theaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*

While faithful Christians were denying themselves, the persecuting Romans were denying themselves nothing.

Even today we sometimes hear the excuse that “it’s just business.” Christians sometimes try to compartmentalize their lives so that they can live one way on Sunday, another way on Saturday, and yet another way on the weekdays. And what does the Bible say about that?

*Colossians 3:17 — And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Whatsoever ye do on a Sunday? No — whatsoever ye do — period. In word or in deed. A Christian is never off the clock when it comes to living a Christian life. And it’s never just business, or just anything else. Everything we do must be done in the name of Jesus, and that means it must be done in accordance with his will.

### **Revelation 18:4-5**

**4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.**

This doom song is full of sermons!

Who is this other voice from heaven? I think this is the voice of God. The first command from this voice is directed to “my people.” And later in verse 6 we will hear this voice calling for vengeance against Rome, and we know that vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19).

In verse 4, God calls for his people to come out of the city lest they follow Rome’s evil example and share in Rome’s destruction. We see this same call many times in the Old Testament.

It was the call that Lot heard in Genesis 19:12-14, and it was the call that Moses heard in Numbers 16:23-26. “Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.”

It was the call that the exiles in ancient Babylon heard many times:

*Isaiah 48:20 — Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans.*

*Jeremiah 50:8 — Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans.*

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

*Jeremiah 51:45 — My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.*

Was this call in verse 4 a call for the people to **literally** flee the city? No, and once again we should consider the example of ancient Babylon.

Were the exiles in Babylon being told to **literally** flee that city? No, and, in fact God told them in Jeremiah 29:7 to “seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”

And, although the Jewish exiles in Babylon did eventually return to their homeland, they did not flee to their homeland, and those returns happened **after** the judgment of Babylon by the Persians that Jeremiah wrote about in Jeremiah 50-51.

Likewise, the Christians in Rome are not being told to literally flee that city. And physically fleeing Rome would not have solved the problem — Roman evil was everywhere! They would have to flee the world to escape it.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-10** — *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*

What we see in verses 4-5 is a command for spiritual flight. The Christians were not to share in Rome's sins. They were to stand apart from the iniquity that surrounded them. They were to keep their garments clean.

Throughout this entire book, Rome has been referred over and over again as those who dwell on the earth, while the church has been pictured as already being in heaven. In these verses, God is simply telling the church to live that way.

Isn't that exactly what Paul told us?

**Colossians 3:1-2** — *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

If you are risen with Christ, then live that way! William Barclay explains it well:

This cry and challenge [to come out] do not involve a coming out at a definite moment. They imply a certain "aloofness of spirit maintained in the very heart of the world's traffic." They describe the essential apartness of the Christian from the world. ... The Christian is not conformed to the world but transformed from the world (Romans 12:2). It is not a question of retiring from the world; it is a question of living differently within the world.

And of course we are immediately reminded of something else Paul wrote:

**2 Corinthians 6:16-18** — *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they*

*shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

“Come out from among them and be ye separate!” That is a central message of this book, and it is a message that we desperately need to hear today. God is always calling upon his people to cut their connection with sin and to stand with him and to stand for him.

Dwight Hervey Small in his book *The High Cost of Holy Living* wrote:

Wherever the Christian finds himself, and whatever his calling in life, his life must stand as a radical protest against the world and its standards.

C. S. Lewis wrote:

Hope means a continual looking forward to the eternal world. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. ***If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.*** It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.

The church has a lot of problems today. Why? Why are some today advocating leadership roles in the church for women? Because they think it pleases God, or because they want to please the world? Why are they bringing instruments into the worship? Because they think it pleases God, or because they want to please the world? Why are they watering down baptism? Because they think it pleases God, or because they want to please the world and be accepted by the world?

Is the church becoming more like the world, or is the world becoming more like the church? Is the world setting our agenda or is God? Perhaps as Wordsworth said, “the world is too much with us.”

Today, our greatest challenge is not **persecution** from the world, but rather it is **seduction** by the world. Can the world see where the church begins and the world ends? I like what Joel Beeke said about the world:

The goal of worldly people is to move forward rather than upward, to live horizontally rather than vertically. They seek after outward prosperity rather than holiness. They burst with selfish desires rather than heartfelt supplications. If they do not deny God, they ignore and forget Him, or else they use Him only for their selfish ends.

Forward rather than upward. Horizontally rather than vertically. What have we said about this book of Revelation? We have said that one of its major goals, and perhaps its one major goal, is to get the people of God to look up rather than down. To see things from God's perspective. **That is the cure for worldliness!** When we do that we will not be changed by the world, but we will change the world. In fact, we will turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6)!

Verse 5 tells us that Rome's sins were heaped high as heaven, and that God remembered those sins. Yes, God is longsuffering, but at some point sin reaches a level that is intolerably high, and judgment falls.

**Romans 12:19** — *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

We are reminded of the situation that Ezra faced.

**Ezra 9:6** — *O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.*

As a nation, we should pause to ask how high are our own sins? How close is our own country to that divine tipping point? How many are left in our own land who are ashamed and blush to lift their faces to God?

**Jeremiah 8:12** — *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.*

It has been said that history doesn't repeat; historians just repeat each other. But in this instance history does repeat, and we see that history over and over in the Bible.

Our own nation needs to repent just as Nineveh repented. But for that to happen, we need a Jonah to call our nation to repentance. And where will God

find a Jonah? From among his people. From among his church. We must be the Jonah calling the world to repent and obey the gospel. If not us, then who?

### **Revelation 18:6-8**

**6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.**

In these verses, God commands that Rome be punished and that vengeance be exacted. To whom is this command directed?

We know it is **not** directed to the church. Why? Because the church is commanded in Romans 12:19 to “avenge not yourselves.” And that has always been true for God’s people. In Deuteronomy 32:35, God said, “to me belongeth vengeance, and recompence.”

Some argue that these commands are directed to the ten horns in 17:16 who would “hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” That would make some sense if the ten horns are the client kingdoms of Rome, but it would not fit well at all if the ten horns are the first ten emperors of Rome.

I think the best way to view these commands is to see them directed toward the angel we met in verse 1 of this chapter. God is commanding his angel to take vengeance on Rome.

*Romans 12:19 — Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is*

*written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

That verse contains both a command and a promise. The verse that **commands** us not to avenge ourselves is the same verse that **promises** us that there will be vengeance.

We see the same thing in the Old Testament about ancient Babylon:

***Psalms 137:8** — O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.*

***Jeremiah 50:29** — Repay her according to her work; According to all she has done, do to her; For she has been proud against the LORD, Against the Holy One of Israel.*

The **double** punishment here in verse 6 may come from the double repayment that was often exacted under the old law.

***Exodus 22:7** — If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double.*

Why the double payment in the old law? It served two purposes: **restitution** to the victim and **punishment** to the perpetrator. It placed the perpetrator of the crime in the same position that the perpetrator had placed the victim. If I stole \$100 from you, then you would be out \$100. If I just had to pay back that \$100, then I would be in the same position at the end as I was before I stole the money. But if I paid back double, then I would be the one out the \$100 rather than you. In modern terminology, the second half of the double portion is the punitive damages.

We see similar descriptions elsewhere in the Old Testament.

***Isaiah 40:2** — For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

***Isaiah 61:7** — For your shame ye shall have double.*

***Jeremiah 16:8** — And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double.*

***Jeremiah 17:8** — Bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.*

**Zechariah 9:12** — *Even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.*

In verse 7, Rome boasts that she will never see the very thing that God promised she would see — “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” Rome’s unbridled self-confidence was fueled by its pride and its arrogance

Ezekiel 28 was directed to the King of Tyre, but it could have been penned about any of the Roman emperors we have considered.

**Ezekiel 28:2-7** — *Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.*

I say that could apply to any Roman emperor, but there is one emperor in particular about whom that description fits the best. Did you notice the phrase we just read from Ezekiel 28:2? “Thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God.” How did Paul describe Domitian in 2 Thessalonians 2:4? “So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” One thing the world has never lacked is arrogant ungodly rulers!

Rome was full of pride and thought it would never and could never fall, and Rome was not the last nation to feel that way.

God’s punishment for pride in the Old Testament was to inflict extreme humiliation, and that is what God promises Rome. Rome would plummet from her glory to her destruction quickly and her destruction would be total and complete. Rome’s affluence, pride, and gaiety would be replaced by death, mourning, and famine.

The language here in verses 7-8 is also found in a very similar pronouncement made by Isaiah about ancient Babylon.

*Isaiah 47:7-11 — And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; **I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood:** they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.*

Both Babylon and Rome were filled with pride, and both later had to eat their boastful words. They thought they would never see sorrow or destruction, but they were wrong. They thought no one saw them, but they were wrong. They thought that there would never be a day of judgment, but they were wrong. They thought their happy carefree lives would continue on forever, but they were wrong. Why were they wrong? That answer is simple. It is the same reason that the prideful boasts of modern man are also wrong.

*Hebrews 9:27 — And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

If that verse doesn't get your attention, then your attention cannot be got!

Is Revelation relevant today? Yes, very much so. And one way in which this book is particularly relevant is that it reminds us that history repeats itself. Egypt, Babylon, and Rome — all great enemies of God and of God's people, and all were judged by God. What other earthly powers have been added or will be added to that list?

Are we looking in verse 8 at the **physical** punishment of Rome, or are we instead looking at the **spiritual** punishment of the persecuting Romans? I think it is the latter. The punishment here in verse 8 comes suddenly “in one day,” and that punishment is being utterly burned with fire.

*2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 — In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

We'll have more to say on that topic when we get to the great judgment scene in Chapter 20.

### **Revelation 18:9-10**

**9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.**

In verses 9-19, we have descriptions of three dirges or funeral songs for Rome. The first dirge is here in verses 9-10, and it is sung by the kings of the earth. The second dirge will be in verses 11-16, and it is sung by the merchants. The third dirge will be in verses 17-19, and it is sung by the shipmasters and the sailors.

Why are the kings, the merchants, and the sailors so upset about the fall of Rome? Because they depended on Rome for their livelihood and their security. The groups in these verses had placed great faith in the military might and the power of Rome. They had placed their bets on Rome! How could they possibly lose betting on Rome? They are about to find out.

Are the descriptions in these dirges literal? No. We are still reading apocalyptic language, just as we have been throughout almost the entirety of this book. In fact, this apocalyptic language is modeled after doom songs from the Old Testament about Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre, as we saw last week.

What then is the point here? The point is to show that the judgment of Rome would cause Rome to suffer, and it would also cause all who depended on Rome to suffer. The point of these dirges is the same point that Jeremiah made.

*Jeremiah 17:5 — Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*

Notice the description in verse 10: “that great city Babylon, that mighty city.” Again, the only city that fit that description when this vision was received was Rome. There is no way to make Jerusalem fit any of the descriptions we see in this chapter.

The “smoke of her burning” in verse 9 is yet another reminder of fire, something we have frequently seen in these descriptions of Rome’s judgment. As before, this description would ring an immediate bell of recognition with the citizens of Rome, who had once literally seen the smoke of Rome’s burning after Nero almost burned the entire city to the ground. And the rumor was that Nero was planning to return and finish what he had started.

But was Rome really so wealthy and so powerful that the kings and the merchants and the sailors of the earth would stop and mourn its passing as we see them doing here? Are such descriptions of Rome historically accurate?

The Talmud says that of the ten measures of wealth that came down into the world, Rome received nine and all the rest of the world only one.

Rome’s wealth was concentrated in and controlled by the Roman emperors. Suetonius described Nero this way:

He never wore the same garment twice.... He fished with a golden net drawn by cords woven of purple and scarlet threads. It is said he never made a journey with less than a thousand carriages, with his mules shod with silver.

Suetonius says that Caligula would “drink pearls of great price dissolved in vinegar, and set before his guests loaves and meats of gold.”

Barclay says that “nothing John could say of Rome could be an exaggeration.”

Another commentator writes that “our most extravagant luxury is poverty compared with the prodigal magnificence of Rome.” “In the time when John was writing a kind of insanity of wanton extravagance, to which it is very difficult to find any parallel in history, had invaded Rome.”

From an earthly vantage point it seemed that Rome had everything and the church had nothing, but things were not what they seemed!

Remember what Jesus said to the church in Smyrna at the beginning of this book.

**Revelation 2:9** — *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich).*

“Thou are rich!” Yes, they were in great poverty — a poverty caused by their devotion to Christ and their refusal to bow down to Caesar — but Jesus said they were rich. Their bank accounts in heaven were bursting at the seams!

And what about the end of verse 10 — what is the one hour of thy judgment? Isn’t that the same hour that came upon the fool in Luke 12?

**Luke 12:20-21** — *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Rome thought they were rich, but Rome was wrong. Smyrna thought it was poor, but Smyrna was wrong.

The theme of this book is that we must see things as God sees them. Only in that way can we see things as they really are. Only through God’s eyes, can we see Rome for what it is and see the church for what it is. Only through God’s eyes, can we truly see ourselves. And how do we look through God’s eyes? We look at his word. God’s word tells us how God sees things.

You mean that God’s word lets us see things clearly as God sees them? Isn’t that what Paul told us?

**1 Corinthians 13:10-12** — *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now*

*I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

Most people on earth do not look at things through God's eyes. Either they make no attempt to do so, or they twist God's word to their own destruction so that they have faulty vision. But one day everyone will see things through God's eyes. Everyone will have their eyes opened to their true condition and to the power of God. But for many that day will come too late.

### **Revelation 18:11-17a**

**11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: 12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and**

**decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17a For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.**

This lament by the merchants is very similar to the lament over the city of Tyre found in Ezekiel 26-28.

*Ezekiel 27:27 — Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.*

These verses in Chapter 18 describe the great commercial success of Rome, and verses 12-14 in particular describe the vast extent of Rome's trade. Aristides described it this way:

Merchandise is brought from every land and sea, everything that every season begets, and every country produces, the products of rivers and lakes, the arts of the Greeks and the barbarians, so that, if anyone were to wish to see all these things, he would either have to visit the whole inhabited world to see them — or to visit Rome; so many great ships arrive from all over the world at every hour, at every season, that Rome is like some common factory of the world, for you may see such great cargoes from the Indies, or, if you wish, from the blessed Arabias, that you might well conjecture that the trees there have been stripped naked; clothing from Babylon, ornaments from the barbarian lands, everything flows to Rome; merchandise, cargoes, the products of the land, the emptying of the mines, the product of every art that is and has been, everything that is begotten and everything that grows. *If there is anything you cannot see at Rome, then it is a thing which does not exist and which never existed.*

Why do the merchants weep? They weep because of their loss of business. Their lament is not for Rome but for their own lost profit. They have merchandise with no one to sell it to. Their concern for Rome totally motivated by self interest.

The merchants, like the kings, stand far off and watch the destruction. They do not attempt to help the great city. The kings believed that Rome was a stronghold destined to endure forever. The merchants believed that Rome was a market destined to endure forever. They were all wrong!

They each had made a decision to throw their lot in with Rome, and they had made the wrong decision. Caesar or Christ? Rome or the church? Which one is the eternal king? Which one is the eternal kingdom?

If the **central theme** of this book is that we should open our eyes to see things as God sees them, then the **central message** of this is book is this: **There is but one eternal kingdom!** And every other kingdom will fall before it, including even the mighty kingdom of Rome!