

84. The Book of Revelation—18:20-24

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(6-29-22)

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So, in our study in Revelation, we are currently in Chapter 18 where God is judging and destroying *commercial Babylon*—which will be the commercial capital of the world during the reign of the Antichrist. I want to call your attention to something that was recently in the news—maybe you read the article or saw a report on TV or in a video that someone texted or emailed to you.

The report was about a Google engineer that was working in Google's AI division—"AI" stands for '*artificial intelligence*.' The Google engineer's name is Blake Lemoine. Mr. Lemoine recently made a pretty shocking claim—a claim so shocking in fact that it got him put on administrative leave from his job as a Google engineer.

➤ You ask, "*What did Blake Lemoine claim that was so shocking—enough to get him suspended from his job?*"

Well, Mr. Lemoine claimed that the AI chatbot generator (a computer that talks to you) known as LaMDA (short for Language Model for Dialogue Applications)—had become *sentient*!

Now if you're a Sci-fi fan you'll immediately remember the 1984 movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger called *The Terminator*. The premise of that movie was that a super-computer developed by a corporation working on AI technology had absorbed so much information that it became '*self-aware*.' In other words, it had come *alive* by achieving consciousness—or to use Mr. Lemoine's term, had become a *sentient being*.

This computer then decided that it no longer needed it's 'creators' (human beings) and created for itself an artificial intelligence system known as *Skynet* to launch a nuclear holocaust to wipe out the human race.

Of course, a resistance movement led by a man named John Conner arose and so Skynet then created a super-computer/robot called the Terminator that would travel back in time to kill young John Conner before he could grow up and lead the resistance.

Right now, some of you are thinking—

- "*Pastor, why in the world are you telling us all of this?*"
- "*What possible bearing could a 38-year-old sci-fi movie have on our study in Revelation?*"

Well, when we studied Revelation 13, we saw how that the False Prophet at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period places an image (possibly a computer/robot of some kind) of the Antichrist in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem—and then causes the image to come alive—to become sentient!

One of the things that Blake Lemoine's claim has done (that a computer has achieved consciousness) was that it sparked a whole debate on what *consciousness* is—or what it means to be *sentient* in the first place. Let me stop and say this—it doesn't matter how much information is fed into a computer; it will never cause a machine to develop consciousness—a machine will never become alive.

At least not according to the current understanding of what it means to be alive. The missing component, the thing that makes human beings and even animals alive is the *soul*—and the soul only comes from God. The soul is what gives the body life—not the amount of information placed in the brain.

The soul *is* the consciousness of any living creature. In some ways, the body *is* like a machine. Think of it this way—the physical *body* is the ‘hardware’ just like a physical computer is the hardware. What makes the human body alive is the *soul* which is like the software in a computer that allows it to function or ‘*come alive*’ if you will.

For there to be physical life, the body and the soul both have to be present—just like computer hardware and software have to work together for a computer to function—both are necessary.

The Bible defines physical death as when the soul (consciousness) leaves the body—which is determined when all vital bodily functions cease—especially brainwave activity.

I remember a quote by a secular philosopher who was talking about this very subject and made this statement—*“The human body is a machine that is being operated by a ghost.”*

That is a secular man’s assessment of what God said in His Word about physical existence—but instead of saying that the human body is being controlled by a ghost—God said it is being controlled by the soul.

It is the soul in man and animal that makes a creature sentient—and the soul is a creation of Almighty God which He gives to an embryo (the body) at the moment of conception (my belief).

Only God can create a soul, because only God is the source of all life. (John 1:4)

The idea that man has created life by making machines so powerful and programing them with so much information that they become alive—is the very thing that man has wanted since the Garden of Eden—to be God! Since life can only be created by God—this idea that man has created life by causing super-computers to become sentient—well, in the minds of some—doesn’t that prove that mankind has evolved into Godhood?

Many computer scientists have mocked Blake Lemoine’s contention that LaMDA has become a person—a ‘person’ with rights (Lemoine believes that Google is enslaving a computer that has become a sentient being).

One article I read said this—

“Most experts believe it's unlikely that LaMDA or any other AI is close to consciousness—though they don't rule out the possibility that technology could get there in future...Computer scientists describe LaMDA as operating like a smartphone's autocomplete function, albeit on a far grander scale. Like other large language models, LaMDA was trained on massive amounts of text data to spot patterns and predict what might come next in a sequence, such as in a conversation with a human. ‘If your phone autocompletes a text, you don't suddenly think that it is aware of itself and what it means to be alive. You just think, well, that was exactly the word I was thinking of’, said Carl Zimmer, science columnist for the New York Times and author of Life's Edge: The Search for What It Means to Be Alive.”

So let me just say one last time—the idea that if man can build a computer powerful enough and load it with enough information it can become a sentient being is ridiculous.

But that doesn’t mean that a demon can’t inhabit it to make it seem like that’s what’s going on to cause the human race to believe that mankind has become a race of gods who can create life. Which I believe will be the Antichrist’s ‘gospel’ when he comes and begins a religion where he proclaims himself to be God with the power to give his image ‘life’—and he will promise to give life (eternal) to all who follow him.

Things are moving very quickly toward the final events that will usher in the return of Jesus Christ to the earth!

So, in our study in Revelation, we are currently in Chapter 18 where God is judging and destroying *commercial* Babylon—which will be the commercial capital of the world during the reign of the Antichrist.

As we have already talked about, many people believe that the Babylon of Revelation 18 will literally be the ancient city of Babylon rebuilt on the Euphrates River in modern Iraq. Others believe it will be some other major city of the world (New York, London, Paris etc.) that is being metaphorically referred to as *Babylon*.

Whatever the city and wherever it is located—it will be the capital of the political power and commercial wealth of the Beast (Antichrist) and his kingdom during the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 18:20-24 (NKJV)

²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" 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. 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 [CEO's of: Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.], for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

The word '**sorcery**' in verse 23 is the Greek word *pharmakeia*.

Pharmakeia is the word that the English words—"pharmacy" and "pharmaceuticals" come from.

It has been pointed out that this is a word that describes conscious altering, hallucination-inducing drugs like LSD and peyote.

The word is used in the New Testament to refer to *magic* and *occult* practices (Revelation 9:21; Galatians 5:20)—because those pagan practices incorporated the use of hallucinogenic drugs which would allow people to reach an altered state of consciousness so that they could come in contact with the spirit realm and ultimately with spirit guides, gods and goddesses.

It's important to understand that Babylon's hold on the world will not be entirely due to her military and economic power—but also due to her occult influence:

"For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived." (verse 23)—

2 Thessalonians 2:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.

Verses 20 and 24 tell me that this '*Babylon*' can't be referring to New York or London or Brussels—why?

- When did apostles and prophets die (verse 20) in New York or London or any other modern city in the world? (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- In response to this, others will say, *“Yes, but when did apostles and prophets die in Babylon in Iraq?”*

Because of this many say this cannot refer to rebuilt Babylon in modern Iraq since no apostles or prophets were killed there. But we need to think of Babylon not just as a literal city—but also as the stronghold of Satan on the earth throughout history—wherever the place that stronghold was occupying at any given time in history.

It started out at the Tower of Babel, then moved to Pergamos when Babylon fell in 539 BC—as Jesus alluded to when He said to the church in Pergamos—*“I know your works, and where you dwell—where Satan’s throne is”*—(Revelation 2:13).

After Rome became the world’s super-power the whole Babylonian system (priests and all) moved to Rome following the power and money in 378 AD. I believe when Rome is destroyed near the end of the first half of the 70th week of Daniel—it will move again to “New Babylon” (rebuilt Babylon) in Iraq.

Over the centuries these places (Babylon, Pergamos, Rome) have been responsible for the killing of millions of God’s people under the evil of the ‘Babylonian system’.

History tells us that first century Rome killed thousands and thousands of Christians—including the apostles and prophets

Now, it is possible that Rome starts out as the capital of the one world government during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation Period—but during the last half of the Tribulation Period the capital is moved to the “*New Babylon*” after the world church is destroyed by the Antichrist.

- *“Are you sure that Babylon in Iraq is going to be rebuilt?”*

No, I’m not sure—but I really believe it’s a strong possibility. Many of the prophecies in the Bible seem to be talking about Babylon in modern Iraq—

Zechariah 5:5–11 (NLT)

⁵ Then the angel who was talking with me came forward and said, “Look up and see what’s coming.” ⁶ “What is it?” I asked. He replied, “It is a basket for measuring grain [*the Hebrew is the standard volumetric measure for commerce in that day*], and it’s filled with the sins of everyone throughout the land.” ⁷ Then the heavy lead cover was lifted off the basket, and there was a woman sitting inside it. ⁸ The angel said, “The woman’s name is Wickedness,” and he pushed her back into the basket and closed the heavy lid again [*speaking of the woman of Revelation 17?*]. ⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women flying toward us, gliding on the wind. They had wings like a stork, and they picked up the basket and flew into the sky. ¹⁰ “Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel. ¹¹ He replied, “To the land of Babylonia, where they will build a temple for the basket. And when the temple is ready, they will set the basket there on its pedestal.”

One commentator interprets this:

“When the time comes it will be marked by commerce (the basket-ephah), false religion (the woman), speedy accomplishment (the wings of the stork), and a demon spirit in their wings.”

All of this is transported to the land of ‘**Shinar**’ (NKJV)—a name for modern-day Iraq and in particular Babylon (Babylon was the city and Shinar was the plain the city sat upon).

Also, in the book of Deuteronomy—a stork was an unclean bird—so there’s an atmosphere of sinisterness in this vision. This could be telling us that the city of Babylon is going to be rebuilt on the banks of the Euphrates in Iraq for its final judgment!

But what all of this says to *us* is—Rejoice! Someday, this world system will pass away, like a great-stone falls to the bottom of the sea and is never seen again—

Jeremiah 51:61-64 (NLT2)

⁶¹ He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, read aloud everything on this scroll. ⁶² Then say, ‘LORD, you have said that you will destroy Babylon so that neither people nor animals will remain here. She will lie empty and abandoned forever.’ ⁶³ When you have finished reading the scroll, tie it to a stone and throw it into the Euphrates River. ⁶⁴ Then say, ‘In this same way Babylon and her people will sink, never again to rise, because of the disasters I will bring upon her.’” This is the end of Jeremiah’s messages.

God’s people during the Tribulation Period will only be harmed by this fall to the extent that they have invested themselves into the mentality of commercial Babylon’s materialism and worldliness (in verses 4 & 5 God calls His people to come out of Babylon before He destroys it).

But make no mistake about it—the ‘*spirit of Babylon*’ has captured many of God’s people even today. (Explain)

Warren Wiersbe—

“Certainly, the city of Rome was the center for world trade and government in John’s day, and it was known for its extravagance and luxury. Politically and economically, the people in the Empire were dependent on Rome. Today, with the complex connections that exist between governments and businesses, and with the interrelated computer systems, it would not take long for “Babylon” to collapse and the world’s economic system to be destroyed.”

As we contemplate the destruction of Babylon, we think of other great cities and civilizations of the past which have fallen for the same reasons she will fall—and one that is about to fall—America!

One of the most widely read books of all time is *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* written by Edward Gibbon in 1788.

One author in talking about Gibbon’s work said—

“In it he gives five basic reasons why that great civilization withered and died:

- 1. The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis for human society.*
- 2. Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.*
- 3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting, more brutal, more immoral.*
- 4. The building of great armaments when the real enemy was within—the decay of individual responsibility and morality.*
- 5. The decay of religion; faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, losing power to guide the people.*

The oft-heard warning that history repeats itself has an ominous meaning in the light of the above.”

The world is terminal and the important question facing each of us tonight is: “*Are we citizens of this fallen world and its capital city ‘Babylon’—or are we citizens of heaven—and its capital city New Jerusalem?*”

Can you rejoice because your name is written in heaven?

If not, then the time has come for you to trust Jesus Christ and “*get out of Babylon*” (the family of fallen man)—and into the family of God so as to escape the wrath of God before it’s too late!

Hebrews 12:25–29 (NKJV)

²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*” ²⁷ Now this, “*Yet once more,*” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

See also—2 Peter 3:10-13 and Luke 12:15–21

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