

## THE REVELATION TO JOHN

### THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

### THE FALL OF BABYLON, REVELATION 17-18

#### INTRODUCTION

- John Walvoord, ... in chapter 17 Babylon is seen in its religious character climaxing in a world religion which seems to fit the first half of the last seven years preceding Christ's second coming. Chapter 17 also records the destruction of Babylon by the 10 kings (v. 16) ... Chapter 18, by contrast, seems to refer to Babylon as a political power and as a great city and as the seat of power of the great world empire which will dominate the second half of the last seven years before Christ's return.
- Thomas Constable, *Babylon is not just the name of a city in the Middle East. It is also a name that symbolizes the chief characteristics of that city throughout history, which have been a particular religious system and a particular commercial system. We need to keep this double use of the name—as both a real city and a symbol—in mind as we read these chapters.*
- Charles Ryrie, *The religious aspect of that system [Babylon] was described in the preceding chapter; this chapter concerns other facets of Babylon, chiefly commercial ones (vv. 3, 7, 9, 11-13, 19). In addition, there is another difference between these two chapters. In chapter 17 it was the Beast and his allies who destroyed the harlot Babylon. Here it is God who destroys this other aspect of Babylon (v.8).*

#### INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 18

- Thomas Constable, *God next led John to reveal the destruction of the commercial/economic system that Babylon also symbolizes in order to inform his readers of its end in the future ... The vision in chapter 18 gives further information about the announcements in 14:8 and 16:19–21. The belief that salvation is by works is the bedrock of religious Babylon (cf. Gen. 11:4). The desire to glorify self rather than God is the foundation of commercial/economic Babylon (cf. Gen. 11:4).*
- Buist Fanning, *The chapter as a whole consists of a series of voices either rejoicing or lamenting over Babylon's resulting devastation and reflecting on why this came upon her.*
- Charles Swindoll, *Comfort ... convenience ... luxury ... recreation. If we're honest with ourselves, we'll probably discover that we're more attached to the things of this world than we care to admit. It's a sobering realization, though, when we arrive at Revelation 18 and learn that all those things of the world that receive so much of our time and attention ... are marked for burning in the fires of judgment.*

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF POLITICAL BABYLON: REVELATION 18

- A. Heavenly proclamations (1-8)
1. An angelic announcement (1-3)
    - a. Concerning the angel (1), *After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.*
      - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The agent of the announcement is another angel who has great power (1) ... He illumines the earth with his glory, apparently reversing for a time the darkness that came as part of the fifth bowl judgment (16:10).*
      - 2) Thomas Constable, *Another angel of the same kind as in 17:1 (i.e., one who descends from heaven to fulfill a special mission; cf. 10:1; 20:1) announced the next scene that John saw in his vision. This angel possessed great authority and glory, probably indicative of the importance of the judgment that he announced ... His great glory, with which he illuminated the earth, probably suggests that he had just come from God's presence (cf. Exod. 34:29–35; Ezek. 43:2).*
      - 3) John Walvoord, *The term "another" (Gr., allon) makes clear that this angel is the same in kind as the angel of 17:1. And the facts that the angel has great power and that the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel lead to the conclusion that the angel is delegated to do a great work on behalf of God.*
      - 4) Grant Osborne, *The angel reflects the glory of God (as in 10:1), implying he comes directly from the divine presence.*

- b. The fall of Babylon (2), ***And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.***
- 1) Related verses
    - a) Isaiah 34:11, *But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plumb line of emptiness.*
    - b) Jeremiah 51:37, *and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant.*
    - c) Zephaniah 2:15, *This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, “I am, and there is no one else.” What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.*
  - 2) Comments
    - a) Thomas Constable, *The repetition of the word fallen (cf. 14:8; Isa. 21:9; Jer. 51:8) probably indicates that God guaranteed this judgment and that it will happen quickly (Gen. 41:32; cf. 2 Pet. 3:8) ... The description of Babylon in this verse is what it will be after God judges it (cf. Isa. 13:21; 34:11, 14; 47:7–9; Jer. 50–51; Ezek. 26–28; Nah. 3; Zeph. 2:15). Ancient Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C., but that fall did not completely fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about Babylon (cf. Isa. 47:11; Jer. 51:8) ... Babylon will become a prison of every unclean spirit and a place of demons ... A prison for every unclean and hateful birds is a figure of desolation (cf. Isa. 34:11, 13; Jer. 50:39). Babylon will become utterly desolate.*
    - b) Warren Wiersbe, *The phrase “is fallen, is fallen” not only adds dramatic effect to the announcement, but suggests a dual judgment: ecclesiastical Babylon, “the harlot,” in Revelation 17, and political Babylon here in Revelation 18. This thought is amplified in Revelation 18:6 when God announces that Babylon will receive “double” for her many sins.*
    - c) Grant Osborne, *The desolation of Babylon/Rome/the empire of the beast is described in three parallel lines. It depicts a ghost town, a deserted city inhabited by demons and unclean birds, taken from Isaiah 13:21–22; Jeremiah 50:39; 51:37 (Babylon); but also Zephaniah 2:14–15 (Assyria) and Isaiah 34:11–14 (Edom). First, “she has become a dwelling for demons.” This is natural because demons are said to inhabit desert areas (Isa 34:14; Matt 12:43). The meaning of this is clarified in the other two lines. She is “a haunt [literally, ‘prison’] for every impure spirit,” building on the biblical view that demons are chained in the prison-house of darkness (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Finally, she is “a haunt for every unclean bird ... every unclean and detestable animal.” This echoes the presence of scavenger birds in Isaiah 13:21 and prepares for the carrion birds invited to the “great supper of God” in Revelation 19:17–18, 21.*
- c. Its impact on the world (3), ***For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.***
- 1) Related verses
    - a) Revelation 14:8, *Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”*
    - b) Revelation 17:2, *with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”*
    - c) Ezekiel 27:33, *When your wares came from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth.*
  - 2) Comments
    - a) Charles Ryrie, *All nations drink of the wine of her unfaithfulness, and “merchants” particularly have succumbed to her luxuries and become satisfied with their ill-gained riches.*
    - b) Thomas Constable, *The political, economic, commercial system that originated in Babylon—and that leaves God out—seems to be in view here. Her philosophy has influenced all the nations that have acted immorally and grown rich at the expense of and in defiance of others. Babylon’s commercial/economic influence has been worldwide. Political self-interest and materialism are its chief sins (cf. v. 23).*
    - c) Warren Wiersbe, *This judgment has come because the Babylonian “system” has polluted the whole world. As in the judgment of “the harlot,” the sin is that of “fornication” or idolatry. The system intoxicated the people of the world with all the riches and pleasures it had to offer. It catered to those who were “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4).*

- d) John Walvoord, *This abandonment of destroyed Babylon to demons is a divine judgment stemming from the utter wickedness of its inhabitants described in verse 3. Babylon in her political character has had evil relationships with “all nations” described as “fornication.” In this, they have been led by the rulers, “the kings of the earth.” The resulting evil association has made the merchants of the earth rich. Just as the church had grown rich in proportion as it had been wicked, so the nations have likewise prospered, as they have abandoned God and sought to accumulate wealth of this world.*

2. A call to God’s people (4-8)

- a. They are warned to leave Babylon (4), ***Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;***

1) Related verses

- a) 2 Corinthians 6:17, *Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,*  
b) Isaiah 48:20, *Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!”*

2) Comments

- a) Charles Ryrie, *The call is for God’s people to come out of Babylon and not partake of her sins, so that they may escape her judgments. In its primary interpretation, this appeal will be addressed to Tribulation believers who, like believers in every age, will be tempted to compromise. In its application, it is a relevant call to believers of all time periods to avoid compromise with Satan’s world system in its every form - religious and commercial.*  
b) Thomas Constable, *Another voice from heaven instructed God’s people to separate from the system that the city symbolizes so that they would avoid getting caught in her judgment. The being who spoke these words may have been an angel speaking for God (vv. 4, 5; cf. 11:3; 22:7–8). Probably He was God or, more specifically, Christ. He called on His people to leave Babylon (cf. Gen. 12:1; 19:12; Exod. 8:1; Num. 16:26; Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6–9, 45) but beyond that to forsake the enticements of the idolatry, self-sufficiency, love of luxury, and violence that the city symbolizes.*  
c) John Walvoord, *The reference to plagues refers to the vials of chapter 16, especially the seventh vial which falls upon Babylon itself (16:17–21).*  
d) Buist Fanning, *This is a sobering word about divine judgment and the instability of all the things apart from God that humans depend on for their security.*  
e) William Barclay, *God is always calling upon his people to cut their connection with sin and to stand with him and for him.*

- b. They must separate themselves from the just judgment of God on Babylon (5-8)

- 1) Babylon’s sins reach to heaven (5), ***for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.***

a) Related verses

- 1] Jeremiah 51:9, *We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies.*  
2] Revelation 16:19, *The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.*

b) Comments

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Another reason for abandoning Babylon and Babylonianism is that God will be about to judge her. Her sins, like the bricks used to build the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:3–4), have accumulated so that they finally have piled up as high as heaven. Babylon has exhausted God’s patience (cf. Jer. 51:9). God has noticed and remembered her sins, and because He is righteous He must judge them.*  
2] John Walvoord, *Though God permits the increment of sin, its ultimate divine judgment is inescapable.*  
3] Charles Ryrie, *Although He acts with such longsuffering that people may think He does not notice what is happening, God remembers; and because of this, the judgment of Babylon is inevitable and just.*

- 2) There will be retribution for her offenses to others (6), ***Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.***
- a) Related verses
- 1] Psalm 137:8, *O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us!*
  - 2] Jeremiah 16:18, *But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations."*
  - 3] Jeremiah 50:29, *"Summon archers against Babylon, all those who bend the bow. Encamp around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her according to all that she has done. For she has proudly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Thomas Constable, *To pay back double is another way of saying to pay back fully (cf. v. 7; Exod. 22:4, 7, 9; Isa. 40:2; 61:7; Jer. 16:18; 17:18; Zech. 9:12). Babylon had persecuted and murdered the saints (v. 24; 19:2). The cup that she had used to seduce others will become the instrument of her own punishment (cf. v. 3; 14:10).*
  - 2] Robert Thomas, *The last hour has now struck, and it is too late for repentance. This is a judicial pronouncement against a sinful civilization that has reached the ultimate limit of evil.*
  - 3] John Walvoord, *In keeping with the enormity of her sin, the voice from heaven now calls on God to reward Babylon even as she rewarded the people of God ... It is the law of retribution sometimes called lex talionis. Divine justice exacts the "eye for an eye" and the "tooth for a tooth."*
  - 4] Grant Osborne, ... *this call for a double portion of judgment stresses again the severity of her crimes.*
- 3) Her self-sufficiency will be destroyed (7), ***As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'***
- a) Related verses
- 1] Isaiah 47:8, *Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children":*
  - 2] Zephaniah 2:15, *This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, "I am, and there is no one else." What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.*
  - 3] Revelation 3:17, *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Charles Ryrie, *In place of the glory and luxury with which she has clothed herself, God retaliates with torment and sorrow.*
  - 2] Thomas Constable, *Luxurious living provides another reason for Babylon's judgment. Her selfishness, self-glorification, and self-sufficiency recall characteristics of ancient Babylon (cf. Isa. 47:7-9; Ezek. 27:3; 28:2; Zeph. 2:15). They also recall the words of the Laodicean church (3:17).*
  - 3] John Walvoord, *The same law of retribution is indicated in verse 7 where the standard of her judgment is compared to her luxurious living in which she was given to self-glorification ... Her willful sin against God is now to be rewarded with torment and sorrow.*
  - 4] Charles Swindoll, *The reason for such a harsh punishment? She "glorified herself," displaying the ultimate pride and self-exultation (18:7). In its most definitive application, Proverbs 16:18 will be fulfilled: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (NKJV).*
  - 5] Warren Wiersbe, *She saw herself as a queen who could never be dethroned, and this false confidence and pride could never be accepted by the Lord (see Isa. 47 for the parallel, especially vv. 7-9).*
  - 6] Grant Osborne, *First, she has "glorified herself" rather than God. Scripture is replete with passages that condemn arrogance, like Luke 14:11, "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled" (also 2 Sam 22:28; Prov 3:34; Isa 2:12, 17; 1 Pet 5:6). A primary emphasis in Revelation is that all glory belongs only to God. Second, she is characterized by "sensuous luxury," a term that connotes both sensuous living and inordinate opulence.*
  - 7] William Barclay, *There is a sin which the Greeks called hubris, which is that arrogance that comes to feel that it has no need of God. The punishment for that sin is ultimate humiliation.*

4) God has judged her and judgment is certain (8), *For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.*"

a) Related verses

- 1] Isaiah 47:9, *These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.*
- 2] Revelation 17:16, *And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,*
- 3] Jeremiah 50:34, *Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.*

b) Comments

- 1] Charles Ryrie, *There is no reason not to understand her final destruction as coming "in one day" (v. 8) ... The burning, too, is to be understood plainly and evidently refers to the burning of the city or cities that are the center of Babylon in its several forms.*
- 2] John Walvoord, *Her wishful thinking in which she said, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" is going to be rewarded by sudden destruction from the Lord which according to verse 8 will come in one day in the form of plagues, death, mourning, and famine, resulting in her utter destruction by fire. Her vaunted strength is as nothing compared to the power of God.*
- 3] Warren Wiersbe, *Sometimes God's judgments work silently "as a moth" (Hosea 5:12), but at other times they are "as a lion" (Hosea 5:14) and spring suddenly, and there is no escape. In one day, the entire economic empire will collapse! But those who have their citizenship in heaven will rejoice at the judgment of God.*
- 4] Grant Osborne, *These apocalyptic judgments are the proper recompense for the enormity of her crimes. The principle is important—let none of us think we will get away with flaunting our self-centered pleasures before a holy God ... God alone is truly mighty, and he is the sovereign Judge.*

**TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!**

- B. Laments over Babylon (18:9-19)
- C. Heavenly rejoicing over the fall of Babylon (18:20)
- D. Justification for the total destruction of Babylon (21-24)