

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

DESCRIPTION OF THE
FALL OF BABYLON

18:1-24

REVELATION OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

Revelation 18

Description of the Fall of Babylon

You can't get away from the fact that God uses two full chapters in the book of Revelation to make sure we understand what He is going to do to Babylon... What's important to God must absolutely be important to us. So let's listen to Him carefully.

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. Revelation 18:1

After what things? In the semi-expanded context of Revelation 16, John has just seen the seven bowls poured out on the earth; in the more immediate context of Revelation 17, he has witnessed the identification of the great harlot and her judgment. Now, in Revelation 18, he sees another vision which entails the description of the fall of Babylon the great.

John sees *another* angel (not the same one who spoke to him in Revelation 17:1) coming down from heaven. The fact that the angel is said to have come down from heaven is enough for us to assume the angel comes at the bidding of the God of heaven, but, in addition, we are told that he has great authority. As if to validate his great role, the angel is surrounded by a glory so bright that it illumines the entire earth. Wow! This is one very significant angel.

And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. Revelation 18:2

The angel cries out, not simply with a loud voice (as some previous angels), but with a mighty or forceful voice. His message will not be missed by anyone on the face of the earth. His message is one of doom for Babylon the great, "Fallen! Fallen!" She will be at the peak of her stature and greatness on the earth. She will be at the pinnacle of her glory when suddenly she will be taken down—all the way down—because God will give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. He will not forget her treachery since antiquity.

Her punishment and demise are so certain that the angel speaks as though it had already happened. He proclaims her destiny, "Fallen!", twice—emphasizing again its sureness and inevitability. She has come to the end of her existence—she will perish, being swept away by the contents of the seventh bowl.

The end of the line for Babylon includes her new persona—no longer the luxuriant despot of the planet, instead, a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean

spirit, as well as a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. (And she will stay in this state throughout the Millennial Reign of Christ until she is destroyed with intense heat and fire right along with this present earth.)

Look at just a few prophetic cross-references which describe Babylon's ultimate lack of glory.

Therefore the desert creatures will live there along with the jackals; the ostriches also will live in it, and it will never again be inhabited or dwelt in from generation to generation. "As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors," declares the Lord, "No man will live there, nor will any son of man reside in it. Jeremiah 50:39–40

Babylon will become a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants. Jeremiah 51:37

And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. But desert creatures will lie down there, and their houses will be full of owls; ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers and jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come and her days will not be prolonged. Isaiah 13:19–22

A great deal has been prophesied repeatedly and clearly throughout the Bible concerning Babylon's calamitous destruction. It is not my intent to exposit the amazing number of cross-references which describe Babylon's final demise, instead, I am trying to stay on the task of helping you to carefully observe the text of Revelation. However, because I believe it would be extremely beneficial, I encourage you to scour the following cross-references on your own, asking God to open your eyes to behold wonderful things from His Word as you do so: Isaiah 13-14; Isaiah 47; and Jeremiah 50-51.

Back to the text at hand...

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality".
Revelation 18:3

Her destiny is determined by her deeds, by her immorality (idolatry) and passion for it. The kings of the earth (and by impact, all the peoples) have committed acts of immorality with her. The merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality. The world has come under the influence of her wretched idolatry and false worship—rejection of the One, True God, and embraced all that is against Him. The Glory and honor, that belong only to the Creator, have been stolen and sold to that

which He has made... and sustained thus far... and will destroy. In simple terms, Babylon and her influence have enabled the entire planet to worship anything and everything except God, Himself... and she will pay dearly for it.

I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." Revelation 18:4-5

John hears another voice (other than the mighty voice of the angel) which says, in effect, "If you're living in Babylon, or if you are part of the world system that Babylon rules over; get out before it's too late!" The alternative is clear; your end will be the same as hers.

God didn't write the book of Revelation and then *add* the seven messages to the churches; He wrote chapters 2 and 3 because their content is related to the rest of this book. If you tolerate sin, you will succumb to it.

Babylon's sins are enormous—they have piled up as high as heaven—and God remembers every single one. He will pay her back accordingly with plagues. Revelation 16:19 speaks of this very time (during the seventh bowl) when God will give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. Babylon and her deeds will not be forgotten. God never forgets.

It is interesting to note that the accumulation of Babylon's sins are said to reach as high as heaven, while the original plot to build a high tower in order to worship the heavens failed by the hand of the only One worthy of worship. (Genesis 11:5-9)

Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. Revelation 18:6

She will be paid back by the use of a perfect set of justice scales—God's. He will use her own deeds to measure her guilt. She will be paid back even to, or equal to, her own deeds. She mixed her own cup of evil and once her deeds have been counted, she will reap an investment she never intended; God will use her recipe and mix twice as much as she dished out.

Think about it... if she hadn't done evil deeds, God could multiply her deeds one-thousand times over and she would not be harmed ($0 \times 1000 = 0$). God is not too wrathful as some might charge, rather, He is perfectly just in all His ways—the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath is the cup she has mixed for herself. Verse six says, "in the cup that *she* has mixed, mix twice as much for her..." Use her own personal recipe and then double it.

To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, "I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW and will never see mourning." Revelation 18:7

She glorified herself and lived sensuously—and to that same degree she will be given torment and mourning. Babylon has said in her heart, "I sit as a queen! I rule! There is no other ruler, no God other than me!" In addition, she says, "I am not a widow! I have never needed Him! I've never been connected with Him! He has never ruled! I acquired my position as queen all on my own!" And she foolishly predicts that she will never see mourning, that her powerful existence will continue as long as she wills. She is wrong... dead wrong.

Do you see this for what it is? She is saying, "I am the Most High God!" A hideous blasphemy against our Father, against our God.

Once again, I am reminded of prophecies concerning Babylon because they are so clear and so very exact. *Yet you said, "I will be a queen forever." These things you did not consider nor remember the outcome of them. Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me. I will not sit as a widow, nor know loss of children." But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells.*" Isaiah 47:7-9

For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. Revelation 18:8

For this reason, because she glorified herself and blasphemously defied God, her plagues will come—pestilence, mourning, and famine, and she will be burned up with fire on top of that! She declares it won't and can't happen, but it will because God says it will (He is the One who is the Judge)—and His strong power will prevail! The Lord God who saved me is strong. The Lord God whom I serve is strong. And the Lord God who is coming again is strong. And He will do exactly as He has said He will do.

Years ago, during the Iraqi war Operation Desert Storm, I saw the front page headline of a newspaper which said, "Baghdad Burned in One Day". That headline automatically reminded me of Babylon's destiny because God said He would take her out in one day; her decline will not be a gradual one. Baghdad was ferociously attacked, and there was terrific damage inflicted, but it paled in comparison to what will happen to Babylon; she will be eliminated from the face of the earth.

And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying,

“Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.” Revelation 18:9-10

Don't confuse these kings with the ten kings that hated Babylon from Revelation 17:16. The kings that are weeping are the kings of the earth, the ones who have enjoyed their own power vicariously through her rule. They have committed acts of immorality and idolatry and lived sensuously with Babylon. Although they are weeping, they are only thinking of themselves, mourning their own loss of lifestyle. They stay away from her destruction because they want to protect themselves from the same torment. They call Babylon the strong *city* (not the United States, not Catholicism) and are alarmed that her great power has been overtaken in such a sudden turn of events.

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more. Revelation 18:11

The merchants of the earth are shocked at the calamity, as well, but they feel no sorrow for her; they only mourn the loss of money from their businesses which were dependent upon her.

...cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. Revelation 18:12–13

What sort of wares will the peoples buy from the merchants of the earth? *Everything* will go through her system. Her worldwide influence will ultimately be worldwide dependence. You won't eat, you won't do *anything* unless you buy it through Babylon's economical system. All the cargoes of need and luxury, including religion and military, will come through Babylon. And her trade will degenerate into human slavery and human death.

The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. Revelation 18:14

Babylon is addressed personally. She has longed for fruit, her plan has been to reap the earth for herself—all things she considered luxurious and splendid. She is told that her plan has been thwarted; nothing will be the same—ever again...

The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!” Revelation 18:15-17a

Once again we are told that the merchants who become rich through her will lament their own loss of wealth, but they will do nothing to try and save her. They will stand at a “safe” distance because they fear the torment and agony she is in; they want no part of it. Yet they feel sorry for themselves and weep and mourn over what was; and is no more. She, who was previously beautiful, majestic, and royal—the epitome of luxurious wealth, is now laid waste, along with her precious adornments.

And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like the great city?” And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!” Revelation 18:17b-19

Her global trade will utilize the sea. Once she is destroyed, so are all the incomes of those who make their living through the waters. They too, stand at a distance, watching her burn. As they see the smoke of her destruction rise further into the atmosphere, they cry out that nothing can replace what they have lost. She will be the city of civilization, and in their opinion, all is lost without her. They don’t care about her, they care about how her demise will affect them. They throw dust on their heads, a ritual showing they consider her destruction to be nothing short of death itself.

Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. Revelation 18:20

The glorious angel possessing great authority from 18:1 addresses heaven, the saints, the apostles, and the prophets. He informs them it is finally time to rejoice because God has pronounced judgment for *them* against Babylon! Remember the souls of those who had been slain were told to rest for a little while longer? Now they are told to rejoice! What a marvelous thing to think of the entire assembly of God’s people rejoicing that their faith in God has been vindicated—an amazing contrast to the mourning of those who had put their faith in the world system of Babylon instead! What a heritage the servants of the LORD have in store!

Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer”. Revelation 18:21

Now enters a strong angel who takes up a stone similar to a great millstone and dramatically throws it into the sea. He announces that, just like the great millstone has been violently thrown into the sea, resulting in its disappearance from the earth as it sinks lower and lower to the depths, never to be seen again; just so, Babylon will be exterminated. Despite Babylon’s greatness, in the end she will not be able to withstand the will of God. And her fate will be permanent, never to rise again.

And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.
Revelation 18:22-23

Her elimination will be so complete that she will never produce anything again—no happiness or music, no labor or work, no food or necessities, no inhabitants day or night, no love or relationships, in fact, no people at all. She had deceived all the nations of the earth through her sorcery, her merchants had been the great men of the earth—now she was nothing, desolated and devoid of life.

And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth. Revelation 18:24

Her guilt will be self-evident. The blood of prophets, and the blood of saints, and the blood of all who were martyred for their faith in the One True God will be spilling from her borders; but it will not be left unnoticed.