**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

**SERIES: THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 18**

**THE FALL OF COMMERCIAL BABYLON**

**Revelation 18**

**After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. 2 With a mighty voice he shouted: “‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!’ She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal. 3  For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” 4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “‘Come out of her, my people, “so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; 5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. 6 Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup. 7 Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’ 8 Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. 9 “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!’ 11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore— 12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves. 14 “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’ 15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn 16 and cry out: “‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! 17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’ “Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. 18 When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ 19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: “‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who had ships on the sea, became rich through her wealth!  
In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’ 20  “Rejoice over her, you heavens! Rejoice, you people of God! Rejoice, apostles and prophets! For God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you.” 21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. 22 The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. 23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’ important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. 24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”**

The downfall and destruction of the mystical Babylon are determined in the counsels of God. Another angel comes from heaven. This seems to be Christ himself, coming to destroy his enemies, and to shed abroad the light of his gospel through all nations. The wickedness of this Babylon was very great; she had forsaken the true God, and set up idols, and had drawn all sorts of men into spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury kept them in her interest. The spiritual merchandise, by which multitudes have wickedly lived in wealth, by the sins and follies of mankind, seems principally intended. Fair warning is given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only come out of this Babylon, but assist in her destruction. God may have a people even in Babylon. But God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually, while those that partake with wicked men in their sins, must receive of their plagues.

When looking at the 18th chapter we see that there are differing opinions as to what its meaning is. These opinions see two Babylon’s: A Mystery Babylon and a Commercial Babylon.

1. There are many scholars that see the Introduction here as being the same Babylon as is described in chapter 17?

2. Good scholars see the issue differently. Some point to two manifestations of Babylon, one religious and one commercial or material. Others see the two as one, both being judged at the same time.

However, there are definite similarities between Babylon as described in [Revelation 17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+18&t=NKJV).

\* Both are under the rule of Antichrist, and have ruling queens.

\* Both are filled with blasphemy

\* Both hate the saints, and shed their blood.

\* Both are associates with kings in fornication

\* Both are under judgment and destroyed.

There are also some significant differences:

**Mystery Babylon (**[**Revelation 17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17&t=NKJV)**)**

· Symbol: Harlot woman.

· Identified with Rome (inland).

· Woman, whore, mother.

· Guilty of religious abominations.

· Destroyed by a political power that previous supported her.

**Commercial Babylon (**[**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+18&t=NKJV)**)**

· Symbol: Great city.

· Identified with a port city (costal).

· Habitation, great city, marketplace.

· Guilty of greed and self-indulgence.

· Destroyed by sudden act of God.

In the view of most scholars it is best to see them as intertwined, yet somewhat distinct. Religious Babylon of [Revelation 17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17&t=NKJV) is judged at the mid-point of the seven-year period of tribulation. Commercial Babylon is judged at the end of that period.

**Another common question is if Babylon of** [**Revelation 18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+18&t=NKJV) **a literal or symbolic city?**

Some have thought it to be a future rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates River in the Middle East. This is now a desolate desert in modern day Iraq. Many years ago, Saddam Hussein was outspoken in his desire to resurrect the ruined city of Babylon in all of its glory. He obviously failed, but it is conceivable that a rebuilt Babylon could be a world economic center, especially with the wealth of Mideast oil. But so far, Hussein or any other leader has not made good on the dream to rebuild Babylon. But most likely, commercial Babylon is symbolic, like religious Babylon. “When the Lord was here on earth He spoke of the great hatred that ‘the world’ had for Him and His own ([John 15:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.18&t=NKJV),[19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.19&t=NKJV)).

**John 15:18-19**

**18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.**

What is this world but a combination of religion, government and commerce? In other words, Babylon in all its parts stands for that which Christ called ‘the world. In portraying the destruction of a (symbolic) city, he describes God’s judgment on the great satanic system of evil that has corrupted the earth’s history.

**After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”**

This angel **coming down from heaven** is so “fresh” from God’s presence that he glows. He announces that Babylon is **fallen, fallen** and the phrase is “repeated like a solemn mournful song of damnation. Babylon is now said to be **a dwelling place of demons**: A sad fate for a once-great city. This is “a prophetic picture of absolute desolation where the proud achievements of man become the demonic haunts of unclean and horrible creatures. Babylon’s sin was not only idolatry (referred to with the term **fornication**), but also pride, greed, and selfishly held wealth which is described as the **abundance of her luxury.**

**And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”**

It is inconceivable that a child of God could be a part of religious Babylon (though elements may creep in). But commercial Babylon, with its materialistic lure, is a constant threat to be guarded against. The warning is focused towards saints who are in the position Lot was in while he lived in the city of Sodom ([Genesis 19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19&t=NKJV)). These are God’s people in a place they shouldn’t be, a place ripe for destruction. **Come out of her**: The call to depart from Babylon and the worldliness that it represents is a theme repeated frequently in the Scriptures.

**Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.** ([Isaiah 52:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+52.11&t=NKJV))

Flee from the midst of Babylon, and everyone save his life! ([Jeremiah 50:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+50.8&t=NKJV))

“My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord. ([Jeremiah 51:45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+51.45&t=NKJV))

**14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”[17 Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)**

For her sins have reached to heaven: The sins of commercial Babylon have piled up like a tower – the tower of Babel. God has remembered her iniquities: This is the destiny of the materialistic world, but towards believers, God says, I will remember their sins no more ([Hebrews 8:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+8.12&t=NKJV)).

**Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day**—**death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.**

The ancient Greek word for **render** (apodidomi) means literally “to pay a debt” or “to give back that which is due.” God will give Babylon exactly what she deserves. Double restitution was required in the Old Testament in cases of theft **(**[**Exodus 22:4-9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+22.4-9&t=NKJV)). This perhaps is a commentary on how Babylon has made her wealth – through dishonest dealings. This passage presents a three-fold sin. First, self-indulgence (lived luxuriously). Second, pride (glorified herself… sits as a queen). Third, avoidance of suffering (am no widow, and will not see sorrow). All these things are characteristic of worldliness and materialism.The destruction of commercial Babylon will come suddenly and with completeness.

**“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’**

So great is the heat and smoke of her burning that these kings must stand at a distance. Some think this may be an indication that nuclear weapons are used in the judgment of these commercial centers.

**“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’**

This long list needs little explanation, except to note these are all luxuries, not necessities. It is plain that the mourning is rooted in self-interest:

**The combined picture is one of complete abandonment to the wealth of this world and complete disregard of the God who gave it.” (Walvoord)**

The profits of commercial Babylon have come through cruelly using others. They sold the bodies and souls of men. This idea has many applications, none less so than today’s widespread human trafficking, prostitution, and pornography. Those who lived for the luxuries of commercial Babylon will be tormented their eternal absence of those luxuries all the more: you shall find them no more at all. Ultimately, hell will be a place of unfulfilled desire.

**Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’**

Again, little comment needs to be made on this, other than to notice that their sorrow at commercial Babylon’s fall is selfish.

**“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”**

Should God’s people rejoice when judgment comes? Yes, but we don’t rejoice in the destruction in judgment. Rather, we rejoice in the righteous resolution God’s judgment brings.

**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.**

This is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s instructions to Seraiah to bind a stone to a text of Jeremiah and cast it into the Euphrates. Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary

**61 He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. 62 Then say, ‘Lord, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’ 63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. 64 Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall.’”** ([Jeremiah 51:61-64](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+51.61-64&t=NKJV)).

But it also reminds us of what Jesus said in [Matthew 18:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+18.6&t=NKJV):

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

This applies to Babylon in [Revelation 18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+18&t=NKJV), because she led others into sin. It is a terrible thing to sin unto yourself; it is even more terrible to lead others into sin.

The great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore:

Some day, this world system will pass away, like a great stone falls to the bottom of the sea.

**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. 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, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.**

In graphic and poetic language, John describes how the industry and commerce of Babylon will come to an end. Sorcery is the Greek word pharmakia, which means, “to prepare drugs.” The lure of commercial Babylon is like a drug addiction, fed by deceptive advertising. The ultimate reason for commercial Babylon’s judgment: She has killed the prophets and saints.

**And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”**

The extent of this charge is an indication that this great city is symbolic of the world system at large. There is no one literal city that is responsible for all who were slain on the earth. God takes the persecution of His people as a personal offense. Those who attack His people really attack Him.

Let us take warning from the things which brought others to destruction, and let us set our affections on things above, when we consider the changeable nature of earthly things.