

Focus on Prophecy GUIDE 18



Time is Running Out

- **Most of the people in the city had concluded he was a traitor. He must be secretly palming silver pieces from enemy operatives. Why else would he be urging them over and over to surrender their fortress? He must have sold out to the unclean, heathen forces besieging their beloved Jerusalem.**
- **So Pashur, chief officer in the temple, had Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks. But the prophet wouldn't be silenced. He kept pleading with Israel to accept the discipline of their God, the fountain of living water.**
- **So King Zedekiah threw Jeremiah into a dungeon. But he kept speaking. Israel was going to have to let go of its sacred temple; the people were going to have to leave the city that had grown hopelessly corrupt. Nobody wanted to listen. So officials lowered Jeremiah into a well, where he sank into the mud and almost starved to death.**

Time is Running Out

- **Still this courageous prophet kept pleading. His people faced the most important choice of their lives. It was clear. They had to choose one way or the other.**
- **“Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death,” he proclaimed. “He who remains in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and defects [surrenders] to the Chaldeans [Babylonians]... he shall live” (Jeremiah 21:8, 9).**
- **The prophet’s words proved true. Those Israelites who refused to surrender were slaughtered when the enemy broke through Jerusalem’s gates. Those who left the city managed to survive—and their descendants would eventually return to rebuild their nation.**

Time is Running Out

- **Revelation 17 and 18 bring us an urgent message. Decision time has arrived. Everyone who wants to survive must “come out of Babylon” (see Revelation 18:4).**
- **If you haven’t done so already, now is the time. John states the issue very plainly, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).**
- **To come out of Babylon means to find eternal life in the kingdom of Jesus Christ with complete obedience to Him.**

Time is Running Out

- **In Revelation 15 and 16 we learned that the seven last plagues fall on those who have the mark of the beast. Those who receive this mark have not come out of Babylon.**
- **The seven last plagues fall on the Earth shortly before Jesus returns. John has just outlined the effects of those plagues, and now he is saying, “Okay, you know what is going to happen, so what are you going to do about it?”**
- **Where are you going to stand—on Satan’s side (inside of Babylon) or on God’s side (outside of Babylon)?”**

An Overview of Revelation 17 and 18

- **THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE GREAT HARLOT (REVELATION 17)**
- **Verses 1-3. An angel invites John to view the judgment of the great harlot.**
- **Verses 3-6. The harlot is identified as Babylon. Babylon is described.**
- **Verses 6-18. Babylon's relationship with other nations and leaders is revealed.**

An Overview of Revelation 17 and 18

- **SEVEN VOICES DECLARE BABYLON'S PUNISHMENT (REVELATION 18)**
- **a. Two voices from heaven.**
- **Verses 1-3. Babylon's fall is announced by an angel from heaven.**
- **Verses 4-8. God calls His people out of Babylon and announces Babylon's destruction.**
- **b. Three voices from the earth.**
- **Verses 9, 10. The kings of the earth mourn the fall of Babylon.**
- **Verses 11-17. The merchants of the earth mourn the fall of Babylon; their means of amassing wealth have disappeared.**

An Overview of Revelation 17 and 18

- **Verses 17-20. Shipping tycoons and sailors mourn the fall of Babylon for the same reason.**
- **c. Two more voices from heaven.**
- **Verses 21-24. An angel throws a millstone into the ocean. This represents the downfall of Babylon and all her allies.**
- **Revelation 19:1-18. There is great rejoicing in heaven because God is victor over Babylon. (These verses will be studied in detail in the next lesson.)**

The Identity of Babylon

- **READ REVELATION 17:1-6.**
- **John describes the woman he saw in vision: “I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.**
- **The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.**
- **And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.**
- **And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement” (Revelation 17:3-6).**

The Identity of Babylon

- ***Why do you think John “marveled with great amazement”? (vs. 6).***
- ***Have you ever felt that you wanted to be a Christian but friends, family, or society pressured you into compromise?***
- ***What can a person do to stay firm in his or her commitment to Jesus?***
- **We discovered in previous lessons that “Babylon” is the name of an ancient empire. We can trace the word back to Genesis 11:1-9 where the “tower of Babel” is described.**
- **This kind of tower, or ziggurat, was built to house a special pagan shrine at its summit.**
- **The term “babel” originally meant “the gate of god.” Babel was a place of man-made worship; people worshiped many different false gods along with the God of heaven.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **At the tower of Babel people began speaking in different languages. Suddenly they could not understand each other; there was great confusion. That's why "babel" came to mean "confusion." In Scripture, Babylon symbolizes the confusion of false teachings—a mixture of religious truth and error.**
- **In the book of Revelation, Babylon becomes a symbol of the religious organizations, sects, and cults that do not completely follow God's teachings in the Bible.**
- **As we've seen in our study of history, the medieval Roman Church system incorporated human traditions as part of its belief system and united with civil authorities to enforce its teachings.**
- **This same religious system will play this role again before Jesus comes.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **Always remember, the Bible is talking about a religious system. There are many wonderful believers who worship God in the Catholic Church, and in various Protestant denominations. They love God and serve Him sincerely.**
- **They are making a positive difference in their communities and the world as they serve others in the name of Jesus.**
- **But all Christians need to make a critical choice. They need to take a stand as did John Huss, Martin Luther, and other reformers who lived hundreds of years ago.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **Many of these courageous individuals were clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. But in their study of Scripture they made startling discoveries.**
- **They found to their dismay that the Church had mixed the teachings of human beings with the teachings of God.**
- **And these traditions had distorted essential New Testament truths about grace, forgiveness, and salvation.**
- **So they had to rise in protest. That is where the word “Protestant” originated, from those who protested against the false teachings of the Church.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **Martin Luther, father of the Lutheran Church, had numerous concerns, but he focused his protest around three key points:**
- **(1) People are saved by faith alone. Salvation is a free gift. The Roman Church had created ways of earning merit to ensure salvation.**
- **(2) The Bible is all-sufficient for teaching and guidance. God warned against adding to, or subtracting from, His Word.**
- **The Roman Church stated that church councils establish truth. In addition, it stated that tradition as well as Scripture may form truth.**
- **(3) All Christians are “priests” who minister for Jesus Christ. The clergy are not the only ones to minister and study the Bible.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **Other teachings that were highlighted with the emergence of Protestant denominations include: baptism by immersion, as opposed to sprinkling; obedience to the Ten Commandments, as opposed to a change in the commandments; and seventh-day Sabbath worship, as opposed to worship on the first day of the week.**
- **God tells us His Word is faithful and true, a light shining along the path of life.**
- **He also tells us in the book of Revelation that the teachings of men will fail and human religious systems will fall.**
- **It is our responsibility to “come out” of those churches and groups which distort basic biblical teachings by mixing them with human doctrines.**

The Identity of Babylon

- **THOUGHT QUESTION: When God calls us to come out of Babylon, He is telling us to “come out” of those churches or organizations which distort biblical teachings. (False or True)**
- **In Scripture, Babylon symbolizes false teachings—a mixture of religious truth and error. (True or False)**

Babylon is Fallen

- **READ REVELATION 17:7-18.**

- **Several key phrases in these verses sometimes confuse people. Christians down through the centuries have speculated in many different ways about what they all mean.**
- **Let's see if we can gain a basic understanding.**

Babylon is Fallen

- **The angel told John, I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. . . . The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. . . . The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful (vss. 7-14).**

Babylon is Fallen

- **Let's look at and understand the key issue. These verses are telling us that nations will form alliances to thwart God's kingdom. Satan doesn't want God to win. He fights to the bitter end.**
- **Up to this point in the book of Revelation we have seen a panorama of the rise and fall of nations. God lays out the sequence of world empires and shows us details about events which precede the coming of Christ. In this description of Babylon's fall, God is again summarizing the history of nations and events from the rise of ancient Babylon to the coming of Christ. We can discuss various interpretations about specific words and phrases, but the fundamental issue stands out clearly. This is what we need to focus on: Are we going to stay in Babylon or come out of Babylon? Babylon is fallen. All the alliances created in opposition to God's kingdom will fail.**

Babylon is Fallen

- **READ REVELATION 18:1-5, 8, 21-24.**
- **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.’ 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’ (Revelation 18:1-4).**

Babylon is Fallen

- **God calls His people to come out of Babylon. Those who remain and share in her sins will receive the plagues and punishment that will befall her.**
- **Revelation, chapters 17 and 18, paint a pretty grim picture. This is serious business. However, remember that God is also telling us that sin and those who perpetuate sin will be vanquished forever. Someday we will be able to enjoy face-to-face companionship with God every day; no evil forces will ever again interfere with our peace and happiness. But these chapters do give people a warning. It is possible to be eternally lost by making the wrong decision. It is possible to reject that forever friendship with God. When God calls for His people to come out of Babylon (Revelation 18:4), He is calling us to make a decision—we must choose whether to be true to Him or to reject Him and remain ensnared in the errors and sins of Babylon.**

Babylon is Fallen

- **THOUGHT QUESTION: Revelation 18 pictures a time when all Christians will have to make a critical choice—to stand for God or to reject Him. (False or True)**
- **It is possible to be eternally lost by making wrong decisions.**
- **Revelation 17 is telling us that nations will form alliances to oppose God's kingdom.**

God's Assurances

- **Not all is doom and gloom, however, in John's vision. In the midst of scenes depicting the warfare that Satan and Babylon wage against God and His people, John hears these encouraging words: "The Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).**
- **There is a wonderful promise in this verse. Jesus is Lord. He is the Sovereign of sovereigns. Remember that childhood game called King of the Mountain? It's simple. You just find a large rock or mound of dirt, someone gets on top, and everyone else tries to push him off. The one who stays on top is King of the Mountain. Similarly, Jesus Christ is going to reign as King of kings, as the highest King on the highest mountain for all eternity.**

God's Assurances

- **There is also wonderful hope in this verse. In the midst of the chaos of Babylon's collapse, the dark clouds part, thunder rolls, and a stream of light blazes down from heaven. Some instinctively cover their faces. Others look up with assurance.**
- **Why? Because in this moment of intense conflict God says, "It's OK. Relax, Audrey. Relax, George. Relax, Jeanne. Relax, (your own name)."**
- **You belong to Me. You are My chosen one. I died for you. I adopted you as My very own child. So come and rest in the shelter of My arms." What incredible assurance from a marvelous God!**

God's Assurances

- **God is full of assurances. That's just the way He is. LISTEN TO THESE PROMISES.**
- **“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6).**
- **“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).**
- **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 38, 39).**

God's Assurances

- **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).**
- **God wants us to know that He will walk with us today and every day until Jesus’ coming. Simply reach out and place your hand in His. Then relax; God is leading the way.**

Conclusion

- **Stepan Germaniuk had been sent into exile at the end of the war. At the time, Soviet authorities were trying to stamp out all religious groups which they didn't control. Still, this pastor wouldn't stop preaching the gospel everywhere he went.**
- **So the authorities banished him to the tiny village of Chumikan at the far edge of Siberia's frozen tundra. They figured his faith would quickly wither in this place of freezing temperatures and constant blizzards.**
- **And when Pastor Germaniuk stepped off the train and looked around at the town's ramshackle buildings and the smattering of small, deformed trees dotting the landscape, there wasn't much to reassure him.**

Conclusion

- **But Stepan knew something the communist authorities didn't.**
- **God was walking with him. And he believed God's promise about turning the evil plans of men into something good.**
- **So he took off his hat in the howling wind and prayed aloud: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, and if there are any people living here, if there is even one, then I can live here, too. I'll glorify you in this place, my Lord."**

Conclusion

- **Stepan managed to find a room to rent in a filthy, broken-down house. The landlady spent all her earnings on alcohol. Many of Chumikan's residents stayed drunk most of the time to dull the pain of their miserable existence. But before long Stepan had brightened up the residence. He scrubbed the walls and floors.**
- **He made repairs around the house. And he began cooking good meals and sharing the food packages he received. The landlady was stunned. She told her friends, "I've got a holy man living in my house."**
- **When the local police chief warned Stepan that no preaching would be allowed, the pastor replied, "And what punishment will you give me that's stricter than sending me here? I'm a preacher by my convictions and my calling."**

Conclusion

- **The next spring the authorities allowed Stepan's wife and children to join him. But they were forced to move into a rat-infested building. When they carried in their suitcases and set them down, things didn't look too good.**
- **But this family knew something. God was walking with them in Siberia.**
- **And so the first thing they did was to get out a guitar, form a circle and lift up a song of praise to God. They believed their heavenly Father would provide.**

Conclusion

- **Soon afterwards, Stepan's work supervisor gave him permission to buy a shack near a forest. The pastor and some of his new friends began fixing up the place.**
- **They added a couple of rooms, and soon it looked like a real home. The family even started a small garden.**
- **They planted potatoes surrounded by stones. That's the only way they'd grow that far north.**
- **During the two short months of summer, the sun beat on the stones and actually made small potatoes grow.**

Conclusion

- **Stepan and his family began conducting worship services in their new home. Neighbors dropped in for a visit. Some townspeople came by to check things out. And they were astonished at what they found.**
- **These people worshiped God with such joy! They loved to sing! Often the children would contribute their own poetry.**
- **Sometimes the meetings lasted from morning to evening. Everyone had such a wonderful time they hardly noticed the day passing.**

Conclusion

- **That family experienced God's closeness in one of the most desolate spots on earth. They experienced it as they memorized Bible passages together. They experienced it as they saw broken people come alive with a new faith in Jesus.**
- **They experienced it walking by the seashore and watching the waves roll in. They experienced it in the darkness of night. Stepan recalled, "We could never get our fill of gazing at the stars. Often at night we would go out to watch them and would sing the song, 'O starry sky, what a marvel you are, what a reflection of God's love!'"**

Conclusion

- **When a local communist party official heard what was going on in Stepan's household, he fumed, "Look, this man has tricked us. Even here he has a paradise."**
- **Yes, God does come close to His faithful people. Yes, God does walk with them each day—no matter what their circumstances. He can turn any place—whether it's a fiery furnace or a frozen tundra—into a paradise.**

Conclusion

- **God is looking for people today, looking for people who will stand with Him and be counted. He is eager for you to reach out your hand to Him. He is eager to give you His assurances. He is eager to lift you up to new heights.**
- **Have you heard the voice of Jesus speaking to your heart as you've studied these chapters? Have you felt the convicting power of the Holy Spirit urging you to completely follow God's teachings in His word? Do you sense the urgency in these messages? Do you know where you stand with Jesus? What do you need to say to Him?**