

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 18:1-24

Topic

God calls to saints in Tribulation Babylon,
"Come out of her, My people"

Title

"Come Out, Come Out, In Babylon You Are"

Disaster movies always feature a chaotic evacuation sequence.

Whether it is a sudden zombie apocalypse or an impending asteroid strike, the roads gridlock, leading to fistfights and shootings.

God will call for an evacuation of the Great Tribulation city of Babylon.

Look at verse four. **"Come out of her,** my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

Believers living in that wicked city will be forewarned of the pouring out of the wrath of God against it, and they will flee.

We are living in the Church Age that precedes the Great Tribulation. Jesus has firmly promised us that He will keep us out of the entirety of the Great Tribulation. He will accomplish it by coming in the clouds, resurrecting the dead in Christ, and instantaneously transforming living believers. We call this entire sequence the Rapture of the Church. It is an evacuation that will cause global chaos for nonbelievers left behind.

We patiently wait for the coming of the Lord to take us to the place He has been preparing for us. While waiting, we are under a kind of spiritual general evacuation order. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth,

2Co 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

2Co 6:15 ... Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?...

2Co 6:17 Therefore **"COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU."**

Before you act on that directive, Paul *also* said, "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world." (First Corinthians 5:9-10).

We are to "come out from among" nonbelievers while simultaneously living among them.

We are talking about the biblical Doctrine of Separation.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Separation From The World Is Something You Laud**, and **#2 Separation From The World Is Not Something You Lament**.

#1 - Separation From The World Is Something You Laud (v1-8)

You can apply the Doctrine of Separation in nine words: "Be *in* the world, but not *of* the world."

A theological definition: "Biblical separation is the recognition that God has called believers out of the world and into a personal and corporate purity amid sinful cultures."

The apostle Paul put it like this to the church he founded in Thessalonica: "You turned **to** God **from** idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (First Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Three things ought to immediately amaze us:

1. First, you are saved and set apart to serve God. We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God's] own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (First Peter 2:9-10).
2. Second, you are on the path of purity, enabled to resist sin and Satan. You can "be holy as He is holy."
3. And third, you have the assurance that we are safe from the coming wrath of God that is the Great Tribulation.

Wowza! The separated life is no burden; it is a blessing. It is liberating. The apostle Peter went on to point out, "Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (2:11).

In the short time we have on Earth, we can overcome things that would otherwise enslave us and instead live a Spirit-led life of purpose, discovering the good works God has before prepared for us.

Ours is not a purpose-driven life, but rather a Spirit-led life that has purpose.

Rev 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from Heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.
Thus far in the Revelation:

- Jesus took a scroll from His Father and opened its seven seals.

- When Jesus opened the seventh seal, seven angels having trumpets to blow were revealed.
- When the seventh trumpet was blown, seven angels having seven bowls full of the wrath of God to pour out upon Earth came forward.
- “When the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ ” (16:7). The next event will be the glorious Second Coming of Jesus to Earth with His saints.

The seals, trumpets, and bowls take you chronologically through the seven-year Great Tribulation. They are the sequential points on the timeline.

The apostle John often pauses during the sequence of seals, trumpets, and bowls, providing details about certain intervening events.

Chapters seventeen and eighteen are a pause; in them, we discover two Babylons operating during the Great Tribulation.

1. Chapter seventeen revealed Babylon in its *mystery* form as a global religious system.
2. Chapter eighteen describes Babylon in its *municipal* form as a global political and commercial system embodied in a city, the literal city of Babylon on the River Euphrates.

If you are interested in angels, the Revelation is a goldmine of information. Start there. Angels are prominent, mentioned over seventy times. Don Stewart writes, “From preaching the everlasting Gospel, to the binding Satan into the Abyss, angels are in the midst of the program of God at the end times.

“Having great authority” reminds us that God delegates tasks, and gives us the authority to carry them out. To have the treasure of the Gospel in our frail, fleshly vessels is not a plan we would sign off on. It should humble us. Think of it: You can confidently tell a person that believing in Jesus is salvation, and they will have the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

This angel “illuminates” Earth with his glory. Much is veiled to our perception.

We walk by faith and not by sight. In the future, we will behold things as they are, with unveiled senses.

Rev 18:2 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!

Yes, this is future Babylon in Iraq, thriving as a world capital city. It isn't a code name for Rome, or New York, or Dubai, or Riverdale.

Author Joel Rosenberg recently wrote, "Ancient biblical prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments indicate Iraq will become the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world in the End of Days. *And the most evil.*"

- The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said that in the Day of the Lord, the city of Babylon would be destroyed and then never again be inhabited (chapters 13-14).
- Jeremiah expressed this same scenario for Tribulation Babylon (50-51).

Here is the opinion of a scholar who takes the allegorical approach to the Revelation: "I do not believe that the city of Babylon in the Book of the Revelation should be seen as representing some single city or nation, but rather for New Testament people it *symbolizes* the hideous wickedness seen everywhere in the world."

Preterists are those who teach that the Revelation was mostly fulfilled in the first century. They say, (quote) "Babylon represents first-century Jerusalem and is not a symbol for Rome, New York City, *or any city anywhere.*"

Amillennialists believe that Jesus is currently sitting on the throne of David and that this present Church Age is the kingdom over which Christ reigns. Donald Guthrie suggests that (quote), "the *symbol* of Babylon stood for the oppressors of God's people."

If you abandon the literal, futurist interpretation, Babylon can mean anything you propose. If it can mean anything, then it means nothing.

The so-called Golden Rule of Biblical Interpretation is, "If the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense."

The futurist position we hold is the only one that obeys the Golden Rule, the only one that considers Babylon throughout biblical history.

- The Tower of Babel was mankind's first attempt to build in defiance of God.
- Tribulation Babylon will be mankind's final attempt to build in defiance of God.

The angel announces what the rest of the chapter will describe - the burning of Tribulation Babylon by God just before Jesus Christ returns to Earth.

The repetition of "is fallen" may reflect that religious Babylon falls first, mid-Trib, then the city falls as the Tribulation nears its end.

Afterward, Babylon will be a prison to incarcerate demons during the one thousand-year reign of the Lord. God has an extensive prison system for evil supernatural creatures:

- Earlier in the Revelation, we read about a place called the Abyss.
- God incarcerates wicked supernaturals near the Euphrates River; we saw that in chapter nine.
- Both Peter and Jude say that a place called Tartarus is a supernatural prison.

After its destruction, Babylon will be overrun by scavenger birds. There is something disturbing about vultures picking away at human carcasses.

Rev 18:3 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."

Think Pleasure Island in *Pinocchio*. The boys can drink and cuss and smoke and vandalize and fight all they want. Afterward they are enslaved as beasts of burden.

Rev 18:4 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.

Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached to Heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Believers will live and work in Babylon. Undoubtedly some will be like Daniel, and others will be like Lot was in Sodom.

"Share in her sins" doesn't mean they participate in sins. God calls them out so they won't "share" in God's *punishment* for Babylon's sins.

Rev 18:6 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.

Rev 18:7 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.'

Rev 18:8 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.

We get discouraged in the world that nonbelievers seem to prosper, having this world's *good* and *goods*. In this life, but especially in the next, sin pays its awful wages: death and eternal conscious torment.

Nonbelievers in every dispensation scoff at the predictions of God's judgment. They misunderstand that "His longsuffering waits" for men to repent.

In the end, nonbelievers will get what they deserve by having rejected belief in Jesus.

Jesus prayed for us, saying to God the Father, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

We are in the world, on assignment from God. Hanford is my posting as a pastor. I'm here unless I receive orders somewhere else.

And so are you. Do you want to get out of Hanford? Out of California? He needs to fill in the blank. You need to be able to say, "Jesus is calling me out of here to (fill in the blank)." He *sends* you; you don't bring Him along with you.

One of the brothers here says it homespun: "*Was you sent? Or did you just went?*"

#2 - Separation From The World Is Not Something You Lament (v9-24)

The Notre-Dame Cathedral fire broke out on April 15, 2019. By the time it was extinguished, the building's spire had collapsed, and most of its roof had been destroyed and its upper walls were severely damaged. Many works of art and religious relics suffered smoke damage, and some of the exterior art was damaged or destroyed.

The French president went to Notre Dame and gave a brief address there. Numerous world religious and government leaders extended condolences. Through the night of the fire and into the next day, people gathered along the River Seine to hold vigils, sing and pray. I recall seeing people weeping as if a loved one had died.

Rev 18:9 "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,
Rev 18:10 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.'

- "Fornication" is an all-inclusive term for sexual sin.

- “Fornication” describes how God views idolatry. It is *spiritual* fornication against Him.

Rev 18:11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

Rev 18:12 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;

Rev 18:13 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.

We don’t need to look at all the MineCraft materials listed. We do need to highlight, however briefly, the “bodies and souls of men.” This is slavery and human trafficking on a scale hitherto undreamt of.

The reign of the Beast (the antichrist) and the rebuilding of Babylon are the apexes of what Satan can achieve. His attempt to “be like God” is a miserable failure.

Rev 18:14 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.

Rev 18:15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Rev 18:16 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!

Rev 18:17 For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance

Rev 18:18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What *is* like this great city?’

Rev 18:19 “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.’

I have probably attended more funerals and graveside services than anyone here. (If you are a funeral crasher... *You've got a problem*).

These verses read like a eulogy for a nonbeliever. All sorrow, no hope, unless it is false hope. The things mentioned are all material, nothing spiritual.

Let's skip verse twenty for a moment.

Rev 18:21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea...

The only thing I miss from *Late Night with David Letterman* is the segment, "Will it float?"

Great millstones don't float. The angel will throw one into the sea, and it will disappear to visually dramatize the total, complete, final disappearance of Babylon.

Rev 18:21 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.

Rev 18:22 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.

Rev 18:23 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, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

Rev 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

A person's reaction to something says a lot about them. Lamenting Babylon's destruction says that the world's final rulers will all be wicked, immoral, malevolent men.

Do you have reactions to things going on in the world that are not quite Christ-like? Probably do. Think about it; talk to the Lord about it.

Tribulation saints in Babylon will flee, but some assigned to Babylon will already have been martyred. Your assignment may not be without danger or hardship.

Let's look back to verse twenty.

Rev 18:20 "Rejoice over her, O Heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

I found it difficult to cry when Norte Dame was burning. When things like that happen, I tend to remember the words of the apostle Peter:

2Pe 3:10 ... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

2Pe 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2Pe 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2Pe 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Peter gives us a 'burn notice.' It's **all** going to burn.

Back in the sixth century BC, when Babylon was big, Daniel and his three friends - all teenagers - were assigned there by God.

They didn't just survive; *they thrived spiritually.*

In-between the Babylons of Daniel and the Great Tribulation, we can survive and thrive in the world.

We do it by maintaining a healthy spiritual separation. By being *in* the world, but not *of* it. By turning *to* God *from* idols.

- An easy example is not to marry a nonbeliever.
- Another easy example is not to partner in business with nonbelievers.

Beyond those, you'll need to ask the Lord.

With Jesus leading, you will discover along life's journey things that are Do's & Don'ts *for you*. Jesus isn't trying to burden you or keep you from enjoying life. Quite the contrary.

Instead of being unequally yoked with nonbelievers, His yoke is easy.