

Text: Rev 18:1-8

Title: "A description of the fall of Babylon" - Part One

Time: 6/3/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: The story of Babylon is in some ways the story of the Bible. The first global uprising against the God of heaven was Nimrod's tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Here in Revelation 17 and 18, the last global uprising against the God of heaven will be this future kingdom of antichrist called *Babylon*.

In the middle of our Bibles, from the transition from Old Testament to New Testament, we have another Babylon - the one ruled by Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, whom God used to bring an end to the nation of Israel and to usher in the time of the Gentiles in preparation for the first coming of Christ and the church age.

Jeremiah was Judah's prophet in those days of God's judgment upon the nation of Israel. His prophecy ends with a hopeful expectation that the godless Babylon, whom God had allowed to crush His sinful people, would meet its final judgment as well someday at the hands of the Medo-Persian empire (Jer. 51:11, "Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his devise is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple").

Nimrod's Babel fell when God multiplied human language; Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon fell when God fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy; and this final Roman Empire ruled by antichrist will also fall.

That fall is described for us in the first 8 verses of Revelation 18, and I want us to notice four things about it together. This morning we will only have time for the first of these.

I. Babylon's fall is determined by heaven (vv. 1-2a, 5, 8b).

Illustration: Two weeks ago, I mentioned that the connect-the-dots puzzle can illustrate the way interpreting some of the Book of Revelation works. This morning, I want to find some interpretational help from the game of Pictionary.

In that game, you are not allowed to say what something is explicitly; instead, you must draw it for your partner who then guesses what concept you are trying to draw.

Interpretation: I believe that the angel we read about in this passage is the third of three angels that John's Revelation intends to be taken as pictures of Jesus Christ.

You may remember that the first of these was the high-priest angel in Rev. 8:3f., and then the second was the king-ly regal angel in 10:1f.. We see in those two angels pictures of two wonderful aspects of the glory of Jesus Christ - the Anointed One. As our Mediator, He is the Anointed Priest and the Anointed King. We have talked in Sunday School about the importance of the Holy Spirit's anointing at Christ's baptism to His mediatorial ministry for us in these ways.

One more Old Testament office was anointed with oil, that of the prophet. I believe that the angel of this chapter pictures for us Jesus as the Anointed Prophet as he pronounces the fall of antichrist's Babylon the way Jeremiah of old did upon Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, and I think that is so for three reasons:

(1) The angel is described as one who has great authority (v. 1, KJV power).

There are two Greek words translated *power* by our KJV New Testaments. One refers to the power of ability (*dunamis*), and the other refers to the power of authority (*exousia*). Here we have the word that refers to the power of authority.

While we recognize the extraordinary ability that angels have as special supernatural creatures of God, when the Bible emphasizes the great authority of someone in a positive sense, it is always talking about Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission teaches us this. There Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We are tasked with the duty of helping others follow Christ and obey His commands, because He has all authority in heaven and in earth and is worthy of the worship and obedience of the nations.

So whatever angel in Revelation may be described as having great authority, I believe that it is best to understand that angel as a picture of Jesus Christ.

(2) The angel is described as remarkably glorious (v. 1).

Ill: It is part of the image of God in man that he can see how glorious something is. If we catch a great salmon in the river, we take pictures and send them to our friends. A bear catches that same salmon in that same river, and you do not have to worry about him boasting about it to his

friends. The bear cannot see the glory of catching a fish like that the way we can.

As creatures made in the image of God, we were created especially to appreciate the glory of God when we see it. Sin ruined man's ability to do that, but our eyes are opened again in Christ.

John tells us that the glory of this angel was remarkable. It was enough to lighten the entire earth. *Glory* is referred to 18 times in the Book of Revelation. In this passage, Babylon glorifies herself (v. 7). In Revelation 21, the kings of the earth bring their glory to Jerusalem during the millennial reign (vv. 11, 23). In every other instance, when Revelation uses the word *glory* it is talking about God's glory.

Isaiah 6 tells us that even the most exalted angels must shield themselves with their wings in the light of God's glory. Other NT passages teach us that the glory that illuminates the entire earth is the glory of Jesus Christ, the light of the world (John 1:4-5, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not").

(3) The angel is described as possessing a strong voice (v. 2a).

The strength of the voice is not in its volume—we normally read in Revelation about a *great* or a *loud voice* when that is the case (5:2, 12, 6:10, 7:2, etc.)—but rather in its power to execute its sentence upon Babylon. It is the strength mentioned in verse 8, "for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

Seis: "It is not simply the word of information as to what has been or what is to be, but the word which effects what it

describes,--the word which brings Great Babylon down" (407).

And so Babylon's fall is determined by heaven's Occupant, the Lord Jesus Christ, here operating in His role as the Anointed Prophet, who has all authority in heaven and in earth, whose glory enlightens the whole world, whose word is the strong word of the Lord. He pronounces His doom upon Babylon, and with that pronouncement He effects that same doom.

Application: Babylon does not see this coming. Instead, she is operating under the assumption of self-determination (v. 7). Self-determination is one of Babylon's seducing doctrines of demons. The idea says that I am in control of my own destiny, I answer to no one beyond myself, and I am truly authentic having chosen to live this way.

In popular culture, this is called sometimes "being true to yourself." In the world of philosophy, it is called existentialism. In biblical terms, it is called self-glorification, and it is the chief sin of Babylon.

At its root this glorification of self is a failure to recognize the great authority, the enlightening glory, and the strong voice of Jesus Christ, all of which will not only determine the destiny of Babylon, but also of each and every one of us. This is why Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

Are you trying to live a life of self-determination this morning, or one that seeks to submit to the great authority, to worship, reflect, and magnify the enlightening glory, and to hear and obey the strong word of Jesus Christ?

The self-determination spirit of Babylon is often alive and well in our hearts, but the biblical record is clear that whenever Babylon rises its ugly head, it always fails. Babylon is fallen, and the fall is determined by heaven. We like to tell ourselves that the way to live is to “call our own shots,” but the doom of Babylon is made certain by heaven. Our doom will be too if we insist on calling our own shots.

Conclusion to Part One: We live in a world dominated by this spirit of antichrist, the spirit of Babylon, the spirit of self-determination and calling your own shots. It is the goal of people around us to glorify themselves, live deliciously, and see no sorrow by believing the way they want to believe and living the way they want to live (v. 7).

Think how tempting the assumption of self-determination would be if you were the emperor of the whole world. What would the temptation to call your own shots be like then?

I think we have the answer to that question in the testimony of a man who faced that temptation—Nebuchadnezzar. We find his personal testimony in the 37 verses of Daniel 4. It is a long story, but Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that begins to come true in verse 28. Let’s pick up his testimony there (Dan. 4:28-37, “28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?’ While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, ‘O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to

eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, 'What doest thou?' At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase").

Have you and I learned the lesson God graciously taught Nebuchadnezzar? Has God taught you yet that your destiny will be determined by Jesus Christ? Have we come to understand that "those that walk in pride he is able to abase?" He worked in my heart that way. I hope He has in yours too. If He has not yet, He will someday. It is best if that happens now in the day of His grace and mercy, as it did for Nebuchadnezzar, rather than after it is too late in the day of judgment and the doom He brings on Babylon.

II. Babylon's fall is the work of an unseen enemy (v. 2b).

III. Babylon's fall is a consequence of worldly desires (vv. 3, 7).

IV. Babylon's fall is a danger to God's people (v. 4).

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*