

I am (in no way) an economist. When daily financial reports come on the news programs that I happen to be watching... I usually take a break and go place my attention *elsewhere*... or go and do something else. ... But even as naïve as I am about economic concerns... I've had my eyebrows raised a time or two in recent years... because of the near economic collapses that we have experienced in our country.

My parents and grandparents would tell stories of what it was like to live through the years of the “Great Depression” in America. Boy! What frightful times of tremendous uncertainty those days were. Movies and books have depicted scenes that make me shudder and hope that it will NEVER happen again.

But (apparently we came VERY close) in 2007. The 2007 stock market troubles (also known as the “bank loan crisis”)... were the beginning phase of what became the **2007–2008 Global Financial Crisis**... the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. ... U.S. lenders had issued a large number of risky loans (primarily home loans) to borrowers who had poor credit – and many of these borrowers defaulted on their loans... causing the banks and financial institutions to plummet. World banks and world commerce suffered heavy losses. People lost confidence in stocks and financial institutions.

(But) then... thirteen years later... the COVID-19 pandemic hit... and it had an even greater massive and far-reaching impact on world commerce. No longer was the “bank loan crisis” the worst threat of an entire economic collapse since the “great depression.”... Now it was the financial crisis brought on by the pandemic. ... [ P A U S E ] ...

Whenever the economy and the entire system of commerce threatens to fall to pieces... even someone as economically naïve as ME feels unsettled and disturbed. ... *“What is going to happen to life as I know it?”* We have all worked so hard to be able to maintain the life of abundance... provision... and comfort levels that we enjoy. So my sense of security gets shaken. ... (More than not being able to buy gasoline and drive my vehicle wherever I need to go)... I am far less certain whether or not my family and I will be able to have food... clothing... and shelter. *“Will I be living out in the forest (somewhere) without heat and electricity... medical supplies... and forced to eat whatever wild prey I can catch?”* ... [ P A U S E ] ...

Take an honest look. ... Don't allow what you know OUGHT TO BE TRUE... keep you from acknowledging what IS (*actually*) true. ...

Have we constructed a sense of security that is based MORE on the current system of commerce and the economy... (in other words: what we have accomplished through the world's operating system) – than on God - (which is where we KNOW our sense of security should be primarily sourced)...? ... Does your sense of security come MORE from our system of commerce and the economy - than God...? ... [ P A U S E ] ...

I have little interest in reading stock market reports... but I have to admit that THIS dependence is *probably* my tendency. It is why I have such fear of living through another “Great Depression” like my parents and grandparents did.

(And)... it is passages like the one we come to today (in Revelation 18) that drives me to ask God to forgive me and to help me to see that this UNSTABLE world system is NOT really where my security is sourced.

It isn't wrong for us to participate in aspects of commerce (like the stock market and banking.) It is only wrong when it gets as bad as attempting to use it as the primary means for living. It can be trying to live without God in our life. "*I don't need God. I can provide for myself...*" ... No. You can't.

Dependency on commerce is a false dependency. So is dependency on government to provide all of your needs... and so is dependency on man-made religion. ("*I don't like the God of the Bible... so I will construct a god of my own liking...*") ... We are in a section of Revelation where we are seeing God show mankind that each of these attempts to live on a dependency on something – OTHER THAN HIM – is futile.

Life that tries to shut God out (live without Him... reject Him for our own self-efforts) WILL NOT WORK. ... Last week we saw this through the destruction of man-made religion in Revelation 17. Today we will see it through the destruction of man's attempt to live without God through an *inadequate* dependence on commerce and government. All three of these elements (man-made government... commerce... and religion) are what Revelation refers to as "Babylon." "Babylon" is the world's system to live without God.

But (just so we are clear)... I happen to believe that Babylon was a physical/literal city built on the plains of Shinar... which is in modern-day Iraq. I also happen to believe that this city will be re-built and become prominent in world commerce and the capital from which Antichrist will rule the world with 10 kings (as his cronies.) ... A lot of evangelical theologians who I admire don't believe that the Babylon in Revelation is a physical city that will be re-built. They see "Babylon" in Revelation only as symbolical

(representing man's attempt to live without God in their life.) This might be the case.

However... my belief that Babylon will be a re-built (physical) city... is based on Scriptures like Zechariah 5:5-11. In that passage... the prophet seems to foretell of Babylon being re-built and becoming the center of the world's economy. (No other interpretation of these verses... seem to make sense... or fit the context of Zechariah's message - quite as well.) ... And then there are so MANY other Old Testament (and New Testament) passages that foretell of Babylon's future fall – *as though it will be a physical city.*

Two weeks ago... when I preached on the Armageddon Campaign... I mentioned and read from FOUR chapters in Jeremiah and Isaiah - (Jeremiah 50-51... and Isaiah 13-14.) These are only *some* of the many passages that are concerned with Babylon's future destruction.

Today (in Revelation 18) we read about the collapse of Babylon – (what I believe is: the city – AND the world's economical system)... on ONE single day. The Dow Jones (and every economic measurement) will go (in an instant) to zero – and never rise above that again! It will be just as if the entire city of New York (today) - or maybe London... or Singapore... burned entirely to the ground. The world's economy would be devastated. These places are centers of the world's economy. ... But Zechariah 5:5-11 seems to be saying that the future Babylon will have all of the world's economic eggs in one basket – all concentrated in one place – Babylon!

### **Revelation 18:1-3**

After John had the vision of man-made religion (the Harlot) being destroyed... (which was the subject of last week's message from revelation 17)... John had *another* vision.

The repetition of "*Fallen! Fallen!*" in verse TWO... gives special emphasis to this event. ... We already know that this is very significant... because (as I pointed out 2 weeks ago) the fall of Babylon is mentioned in 40 passages of both the Old and New Testaments. It is a major theme of Scripture.

God does NOT want any of us to depend on other things – apart from Him. He will take away man's attempt to live without Him. ... Finally – near the end of His Holy Word... (here in Revelation 18) we see human government and commerce are decisively removed. "*Fallen! Fallen!*" – at long last!!! ... (Now)... all that will be left – is the establishment of God's Kingdom... and mankind's (rightful) total dependance on IT.

Every time that I pray the Lord's prayer... I am praying for this significant Scriptural event. "*Hallowed be Your Name. Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*" ... Babylon must fall... in order for this to happen. No wonder there is such an emphasis of it throughout the Bible.

But there is another reason why the fall of Babylon is so important. That reason is – because the return of the Jews (as God's people) is so closely tied to the fall of Babylon. God is bringing the Jews (who rejected Jesus Messiah) back to Himself. (First) let me show you (once again) a clear Old Testament prophecy that declares God is going to redeem His people (the Jews) to Himself... and then I will relate some Scriptures that relate the fall of Babylon to the Jews return to God. ... Zechariah... Jeremiah... Isaiah... and Ezekiel... all have so much to say about God's people coming back to

Him... but here is just one of the many passages that clearly show us that the Jews will return to God and recognize Jesus is Messiah...

**Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

Zechariah 12:10 is written – surrounded by verses on into chapter 13 that speak of Israel coming back to the Lord and putting away all idols – FOREVER. All of this will happen one day. They will recognize Jesus (Who they pierced – and will deeply mourn)... they will return to God... and they will put away all of their falsehood FOREVER. ... And Babylon's fall will play a part in this.

(Now) I would like to return to another passage that I showed you two weeks ago... because Revelation 18 is about to speak of it again. God is going to warn Jews (who have probably been influenced by the 144,000 witnesses of Revelation 7... and the two powerful witnesses in Jerusalem that Revelation 11 speaks of...). God will warn them to flee Babylon just before it is destroyed. He tells them to go and proclaim in Jerusalem... how they have been mercifully spared. And THIS they will do.

**Jeremiah 50:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> *“Flee from the midst of Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as male goats before the flock.*

**Jeremiah 51:6-10 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> *“Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her. <sup>7</sup> Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD’s hand, making all the earth drunken; the*

*nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad.*

*<sup>8</sup> Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. <sup>9</sup> We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies. <sup>10</sup> The LORD has brought about our vindication; come, let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.*

Now look with me and see how this is picked-up (here) in Revelation 18...

### **Revelation 18:4-8**

This is (most likely) the voice of God Himself... calling His Tribulation Saints to flee from the city and tell their Jewish kinsmen in Jerusalem about God's merciful action in warning them. ... Perhaps they will flee and go into Jerusalem and show the people such passages as I have just read from Jeremiah. *"Look how our Merciful God gave us such accurate prophecy to warn us. He is real – Folks! We cannot deny it! ... Oh! And here's another look at what this says in Zechariah 12:10. ... And since I have your attention look with me at Isaiah 53..."*

The Fall of Babylon... and God's warning about it – is going to get Israel's attention. Babylon will seem so secure – untouchable... unsinkable (just like the Titanic.) ... So when it falls and prophecy shows that God predicted it... God will have the attention of His people.

In verse 6 God calls for Babylon's sins to be paid back *double according to her deeds*. (I must confess) – I gasped a little at this... and maybe you did too. At first glance this does not seem very God-like. He tells you and I that we are to forgive anyone who does us wrong. Taking vengeance (He tells us) is wrong. Even the Old Testament Law said only and "eye-for-an-

eye... only “tooth-for-a-tooth.” But God here is talking about paying back DOUBLE...?

O.K... first in Romans 12:19... we are indeed told that WE are not to take our own vengeance. But the rest of the verse goes on to say – “but leave room for the wrath of God...” and this (in revelation 18) is the wrath of God. ... We are never told to give up our desire for justice. We are told to leave it in the hands of the ONLY ONE Who knows what true justice is – God Himself. ... And what God wrote in His Old Testament Law was holding-back man (whose angry emotions will often skew true justice) from extracting double and triple payments of what they lost.

If you have been hurt deeply... trying to take vengeance *yourself* will only lead to bitterness on your part. Let God settle the score. He will do it far more effectively than you. Revelation 18 should encourage us all – that God will right all wrongs. We don’t need to.

Our passage today (next) turns to three groups of mourners over Babylon’s fall. First we see the anguish of kings.

### **Revelation 18:9-10**

Their source of power and wealth is now gone. The same will be true of the world’s merchants. So they will also mourn deeply.

### **Revelation 18:11-17a**

Unsold merchandise will sit in Amazon and Walmart warehouses... on docks... and store shelves. Before the Covid-19 onset... this would have seemed UNTHINKABLE here in America. We enjoy the greatest economy the world has ever known. Yet... in ONE HOUR... stores and thriving



businesses will shut down forever. Major chains will file for bankruptcy. Online stores will go offline and suddenly there will be no ability to buy and sell.

Interestingly “slaves and human lives” are also mentioned as commodities that can no longer be bought and sold. I read recently that slavery is more abundant today than it has ever been in the history of the world. Human trafficking is a tremendous problem – that has received too little attention. According to the State Department... an estimated 24.9 million people have been bought and sold against their will – and that number may be much HIGHER because of the untold millions that the Mexican cartels have flooded into our country the last four years.

And then... those who transport shipments of merchandise will be in anguish.

### **Revelation 18:17b-20**

This group is a little different than the first two (the kings and the merchants.) The first two groups mourned their loss of political power and wealth. The transporters will mourn because of the loss of Babylon’s greatness – “*What city was like the great city?*” I am not sure what the significance of this is... but for me... this tells me that this was a physical city. The Babylon of Revelation is NOT just symbolical of worldwide commercialism. The transporters try to compare it with other cities.

The scene of mourning from the shipmasters and seafaring men... reminds me of what happened during 911 – after the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. Boats fled from New York harbor and watched with horror from

a distance. But 911 is simply a foretaste of what the fall of Babylon will be like.

### **Revelation 18:21-24**

What is described for us in Revelation 18 is such a good reminder of why we shouldn't put our hope in riches (or... in other words... the economy.)

#### **Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)**

*<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Now let me go back and ask the question that I initiated when we began. Do you feel more secure because of your investments of a bank account... stocks... or real estate property – **OR** - is your security PRIMARILY coming from your investments in heavenly treasure? ... What is it that you truly value? Worldly wealth is transitory. One day you may have it – and the next day it is gone! Revelation 18 speaks of this... and the warnings we have had in recent years do too (911... the Banking Crisis of 2007-2008... and the Covid-19 Pandemic.)

Proverbs 11:28 warns... “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.”

God will one day make this truth very certain to everyone. But you and I need to know (and live) by this truth RIGHT NOW. ... God wants our trust to be PRIMARILY on Him.