

Week of January 20-26

CRASH AND BURN

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 18

When I was just a child, my family planned a vacation to Florida. We had recently purchased a small camping trailer and had used it around town to become familiar with its features. It was time to take it on the road. Unfortunately, on our way down to Florida, a freak wind hit the back of the trailer. It flipped the trailer and car we were in and we went sliding down the interstate upside down in the station wagon. A state trooper happened to be following us and witnessed the entire accident. He expected to find no one alive. By God's grace and mercy, we survived the crash. The trooper immediately moved us away from the vehicles for fear of a fire. Things were bad enough with the crash but it would have been so much worse if the car had exploded into flames. Fortunately, it did not. There was only the crash but no burn.

In Revelation chapter 18, it's a different story. In this chapter, the apostle John writes in poetically vivid language, describing the crash and burn of the great prostitute, Babylon, that he had seen in chapter 17. Using the imagery of a city's destruction, John portrays the complete collapse of the satanically inspired world system that has conspired to rebel against the Lord and persecute God's people. Each ungodly pagan system that arises in opposition to God and his people, whether the ancient Babel of Genesis, the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the Roman Empire of John's day or the end-time kingdom of the anti-Christ are simply manifestations of Babylon the great harlot. She, indeed, is the mother and queen (18:7) of them all.

But, she is going down in a mighty crash and burn. *"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!" "...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."* Much of the chapter is filled with the horrified responses of those who witness the event: merchants, sea captains, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and the kings of the earth. They are stunned by this massive crash and burn. They find it hard to believe that it could happen. For the Christian, however, it's a time of rejoicing as verse 20 points out: *"Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you."*

After our crash, my folks decided we needed to keep going to Florida. So, we salvaged our things from the trailer and station wagon, my dad rented a car, and we went to Florida after all. For Babylon, however, there will be no going on, no recovery or restoration: *"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."*

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read Jeremiah 50-51 and Ezekiel 26-27. See if you can identify any Old Testament parallels to Revelation 18 in the prophecies against the ancient cities of Babylon and Tyre. Seek the Lord in prayer 1) That you would stay pure and not compromise with the world system aligned against God (Rev 18:4-5) and 2) You would reach folks for Christ while you still have time.

Take-a-way: *When "Babylon" falls, it will be a crash and burn with no survivors.*