Table Host Discussion Guide

Week 9: The Fall of Babylon

This week, Revelation 17—18 takes us deeper into the judgment of Babylon that was announced in the previous chapters. John sees a prostitute seated on a scarlet beast, representing the city of Rome and the powerful empire that supported her. Through imagery drawn from the Old Testament, Revelation exposes the idolatry, wealth, corruption, and persecution associated with this seemingly invincible kingdom. The seven hills point to Rome, while the kings and horns reveal the political powers that sustained the empire and eventually contributed to its downfall. Chapter 18 announces Babylon's destruction with prophetic certainty and calls God's people to separate themselves from her sins. As kings, merchants, and sailors mourn the loss of their prosperity, heaven calls God's people to rejoice because God has vindicated those who suffered for their faith. These chapters remind us that earthly kingdoms, no matter how powerful or prosperous, are temporary. The kingdom of Jesus Christ has already been established, and it will never be destroyed. **Rome was not eternal. Jesus is.**

Discussion Questions

1. What do the prostitute and the beast in Revelation 17 reveal about the Roman Empire?

Answer: John describes a woman dressed in purple and scarlet, covered in expensive jewelry, and holding a golden cup filled with abominations. Her appearance represents extraordinary wealth, luxury, and power, but beneath that beauty is corruption and idolatry. The woman represents Rome, the great city, while the beast represents the imperial power supporting her. The seven hills provide a recognizable connection to Rome, and the woman's drunkenness with the blood of God's people reveals the empire's persecution of Christians. Revelation exposes the spiritual reality behind Rome's impressive outward appearance: a kingdom that glorified itself, demanded worship, and opposed the people of God (Revelation 17:1–11, 18).

Application: Why is it easy to associate wealth, influence, or success with God's approval? How can we learn to evaluate people, institutions, and even our own lives by God's standards rather than outward appearances?

2. What does the eventual destruction of Rome teach us about God's sovereignty over earthly kingdoms?

Answer: The ten horns represent rulers and regional powers associated with the Roman Empire. These authorities helped sustain Rome's influence, but Revelation

describes them eventually turning against the prostitute. The empire that seemed impossible to defeat would ultimately struggle to maintain its own unity and stability. This connects to Daniel's vision of the fourth kingdom, which was strong like iron but also brittle like clay (Daniel 2:40–43). Most importantly, Revelation 17:17 reveals that God was accomplishing His purposes even through the political decisions and conflicts of earthly rulers. Rome believed it controlled the world, but God remained sovereign over Rome.

Application: When political events, national conflicts, or circumstances beyond your control create uncertainty, where do you tend to place your confidence? How does remembering that God is sovereign over earthly powers change the way you respond?

3. What does God's command to “come out of her, my people” mean for Christians today?

Answer: In Revelation 18:4, God calls His people to separate themselves from Babylon so they will not participate in her sins or share in her judgment. This was not necessarily a command for Christians to physically leave Roman territory. Rather, they were being called to reject the idolatry, immorality, exploitation, and emperor worship that characterized the surrounding culture. For first-century believers, refusing to participate could cost them their reputation, livelihood, or even their lives. Yet God reminded them that Rome's power was temporary. Christians today face the same fundamental choice: live faithfully among the people of the world without adopting the world's rebellion against God.

Application: Where do you feel the greatest pressure to conform to the values or expectations of the surrounding culture? What might it look like to be set apart for Christ while still loving and reaching the people around you?

4. Why does the world mourn Babylon's destruction while God's people are called to rejoice?

Answer: Revelation 18 describes three groups mourning Babylon's fall: kings, merchants, and those who earned their living from the sea. Each had benefited from Rome's power, luxury, and enormous trading economy. Their sorrow reveals how deeply their prosperity depended upon the empire. The list of merchandise even includes human beings sold as slaves, exposing the moral corruption of a society that treated people as commodities (Revelation 18:11–13). But in verse 20, heaven calls God's people to rejoice. The same empire that enriched the world had persecuted the saints. Its judgment was an answer to the martyrs who cried out for justice in Revelation 6. The world mourned its lost prosperity, but God's people rejoiced in His justice.

Application: What does this contrast reveal about the difference between what the world values and what God values? How can we enjoy the blessings of prosperity

without allowing wealth, comfort, or financial security to become the foundation of our lives?

5. What does the finality of Babylon's fall teach us about the kingdom of Jesus Christ?

Answer: Revelation 18 concludes with an angel throwing a great millstone into the sea, declaring that Babylon will be thrown down and never again possess its former power. The imagery recalls Jeremiah's prophecy against ancient Babylon (Jeremiah 51:63–64). It also points us back to Daniel 2, where four earthly kingdoms are followed by a kingdom established by God that will never be destroyed. Rome was an extraordinarily powerful empire, but it could not defeat Christ or destroy His church. This does not mean Christians will never experience persecution again. It means that no earthly kingdom, however powerful, can ultimately overcome the kingdom Jesus has established. Earthly powers rise and fall, but Christ reigns forever (Daniel 2:44–45; Revelation 17:14; 18:21–24).

Application: What temporary things are you most tempted to build your life upon—financial security, political stability, career success, comfort, or the approval of others? How would your priorities change if you lived every day with greater confidence that Christ's kingdom is the only kingdom that will never end?

Prayer Prompts

1. **For undivided allegiance to Jesus:**
   Jesus, help us recognize anything in our lives that competes with You for our worship, trust, or obedience. Give us the courage to live as Your people, refusing to compromise with the sins of the surrounding culture. Teach us to love the world without becoming like it, and to remain faithful even when following You comes at a cost. (Revelation 18:4–5; Romans 12:2)

2. **For hearts that value what God values:**
   Father, protect us from the pride, greed, and selfishness that characterized Babylon. Help us receive Your blessings with gratitude without placing our confidence in wealth or prosperity. Give us hearts that pursue righteousness, love justice, and recognize the value of every person made in Your image. (Revelation 18:3, 11–13; Micah 6:8)

3. **For confidence in Christ's eternal kingdom:**
   Lord Jesus, thank You that no earthly power can overthrow Your kingdom. When the world feels unstable or the future seems uncertain, remind us that You are reigning and Your purposes cannot fail. Strengthen us to remain faithful, confident that every earthly kingdom will eventually pass away, but Your kingdom will endure forever. (Daniel 2:44–45; Revelation 17:14; 18:20–21)