

The Purpose of Grace Growth Groups:

Growth Groups help you take your next step with God by developing meaningful friendships built around God's Word. As we connect with one another and with God's Word, incredible things take place and we naturally grow. In community, this growth occurs through 4 primary activities:

We SHARE Life

Each week we'll take time to connect and share what is happening in our lives. This will become more natural as we begin to feel more comfortable with one another. Sharing life and accepting each other is essential to the healthy relationships needed for growth groups.

We STUDY God's Word

Each week we'll study the previous week's sermon text, though we will not rehash the sermon. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life. Accountability to God's Word is transformational and brings spiritual growth in our lives. We also take time to seek God in prayer for relevant needs and issues present in our group.

We SUPPORT Each Other

Each week we'll learn how to care for one another as Christ instructed us. People who know each other well, care for each other well. This care will take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging, accountability, advice, and meeting real needs.

We SERVE Together

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. Jesus reminds us that the world will know we're his disciples by our love. The role each member fills in serving one another and the local community is essential; for we were created to serve others, not ourselves. Throughout the semester, we will serve the other members of our group and together the group will serve the local community through one service project.



Commercial Babylon

2 Observations from Revelation 18:1-24:

- I. Last week (Chapter 17) begins the process of the destruction of Babylon.
 - A. Religious aspects of Babylon fall in Chapter 17
 - B. Commercial aspects of Babylon fall in Chapter 18
- II. There is a clear call for the saints to come out of Babylon.
 - A. The saints are called to come out of Babylon lest we share in her sins.
 - B. This is the ongoing challenge of being in the world but not being of it.
 - C. For by her "sorcery" the nations were deceived (v.23)

Growth Group *Leader's* Guide

For the week of October 1st, 2017

Fall Growth Group Information:

- **Today begins Week 5 of our Fall Semester of Growth Groups.**
Each semester lasts for 15 weeks. Sunday's mark the beginning of each new week.

Where to begin...

- **1. Pray, 2. Read Revelation 18:1-24, and 3. Know the context:**

By the end of Revelation 16, John has shared what will occur through the end of the 7-year Tribulation. The rest of the book provides additional details not mentioned before in the text. In chapter 17, John gave details about the Antichrist's one-world government, which will have its headquarters in the rebuilt city of Babylon (*i.e., it presently does not exist but will be rebuilt during the Tribulation*). The government in Babylon will blend all religions and nations into one, and they will rule the world. In our text, Chapter 18 records how this one-world religious government of Babylon will be destroyed just before Jesus returns. Finally, in chapters 19-22 John shares specific details concerning the future Second Coming of Jesus, the Millennial Kingdom which follows, and finally, the New Heavens and the New Earth.

My Story:

1. How does it make you feel to know that one day the world will look very differently than it does right now; as all nations and religions merge into one new entity led eventually by one world leader (Antichrist)?

This sets up the conversation about the destruction of Babylon. If we can identify something that we want to end; then, perhaps we can understand, in some part, how badly God wants sin and wickedness to end.

Digging Deeper:

1. Babylon has a history full of dark, spiritual forces in the Scriptures. Here, in verses 1-3, it reveals that Babylon is a *dwelling place for demons*. What role do you feel demons play in the day-to-day life of both church and unchurched people? (*cf. Ephesians 6:12*)

Demonic influences have been around since the Fall; they're present at times in the OT. Yet, here in our text, with its

destruction, Babylon is to become a habitation of demons. This will be the place of demonic abode and confinement during the Messianic Age (vv.1-2). This is hardly true of Babylon today. The reason for this severe judgment of Babylon will be the political (*kings of the earth*) and economic (*merchants of the earth*) corruption originating in this city because of Antichrist's rule (v.3).

Potential Follow-Up: (1) *Jesus dealt with demonic spirits in his ministry; why do you think Jesus had such confrontation with the demonic spirits?* In the Old Testament, there is activity of demons and demonic spirits, but when we get into the Gospels, the demonic activity is "off the chart." (*cf. Matthew.8:16, 32; Mark 1:34,39; Luke 4:35; 13:32*). (2) *From Jesus' example, what should be our approach today?*

The armor of God is dealt with in Ephesians 6, because today, the believer is asked to continue in the ministry that Jesus initiated. He desires his church to shine his light and drive back the darkness. This reveals that even today, though it may not be a popular opinion, the influence of demonic activity is still great. We need God's protection and armor to do "battle" each day in the spiritual realm. The danger is that our spiritual enemy tries to appear as "an angel of light," and befriend us. If he can work a foothold into our lives, then he knows he's got believers right where he wants them, to do damage in their lives/families/churches. But, in order to be like Jesus and approach each day ready to push back the darkness; to do that, we need to be spiritually prepared, by putting on the whole armor of God; so that we are not unprepared or unwise to the enemy's presence. Our battle is not against flesh or blood, but against principalities and powers – *i.e., the spiritual world*.

2. Verse 4 warns believers of the influence of Babylon. Read about the story of Lot from Genesis 19 and respond why you feel God makes this warning? What does God want his people to know and do in response to this temptation?

Remember, that John in ch.17-18 takes us back into the Tribulation, though by the end of ch.16 we've come to the end of the 7 year period. During the first half of the Tribulation this one-world government/religion will be persuasive and tempting for those on the earth; so much so, that many will turn to the Antichrist, and eventually take his mark on their foreheads or right hand.

However, even still, during this, the Lord is still saving souls, as a large multitude of people will finally realize that He truly is the Lord Almighty and that only the gospel message of Jesus Christ can

save them. The call from heaven warns these young believers to leave Babylon before it is destroyed.

Since the beginning, the people of God have coexisted with ungodly people. God has always desired his people would be separate and different from the world. Throughout the Scriptures, God has warned his people of the dangers and temptations of the nations around them. Though it may seem harsh, God knew the danger these ungodly nations would have on His people, therefore, in Deuteronomy 7, God warns them to destroy them completely (vv.2-4) and not to show mercy or make covenants, because they would lead Israel away from God. Later, Joshua (23:7) years later, now in the Promised Land, still are dealing with these other nations; and Joshua warns Israel before he dies not to mix with them, to become like them, for they will turn their hearts away from God (23:8-13).

The point is clear – Though we live in the world and are called to reach the world; we are not to live like the world. The world must observe in us an example of a godly life; only a godly life can influence an ungodly world. Otherwise, ungodly influences will rub off on God's people. It's harder to pull people up, than it is to be pulled down. God warns his people of this danger repeatedly in Scripture.

3. The destruction of Babylon will come swiftly (*in a single hour; cf., vv. 8-9, 17, 19*) as unbelievers watch in shock (*vv.9-20*) and mourn over the loss of this great city that blended all religions and nations. Why do you think they weep over the loss of Babylon, yet do not weep because of their sins against God?

The answer lies in what we value. Unbelievers, even today, value tolerance and faith that blends elements from other faiths into one. It's not hard to see how this will be even greater in the future days of the Tribulation. But, the simple fact that they weep over the loss of Babylon is due to where their hearts are; what they value is gone... they do not value God, repentance, or salvation. As a result, the thing they gave their lives to (i.e., Babylon), has been destroyed. They put their hopes in Babylon, rather than in God. So, when it's destroyed, so is their hopes and dreams. Unfortunately, their hopes are built on a foundation that will not last. This is why they mourn as they do; they've staked their lives and eternities on the false hope of Babylon... rather than God.

After Babylon's destruction there will be intense lamenting by those who invested heavily in her, became rich by her, but will now be bankrupt by her destruction. Three classes of people will mourn

over Babylon (vv.9-19). First, is the weeping of kings (the political rulers of the world, vv.9-10). These are the seven kings who have co-reigned with Antichrist and submitted their authority to him, which makes him the King of Babylon. Whatever power or authority they had, was held by the grace of Babylon. Seeing their authority waning with Babylon's destruction, they will lament the swiftness of the judgment. They will be able to see the smoke of Babylon far off (vv.11-17). Babylon will become the economic center of the world, the center of business and world trade...but it will all go up in smoke, and the wealth of the merchants will be no more. This second group of merchants will be heard lamenting indeed. The third group who weep will be the transporters of goods who benefited from their association with Babylon (vv.17-19).

Since the merchants will no longer have goods to market, the transporters will no longer have merchandise to transport. Therefore, they too will lament greatly. While they weep, v.20 reveals how the apostles, prophets, and saints rejoice in heaven b/c Babylon receives its final judgment.

The world weeps over what it values, when it loses it. The world will always value self and what benefits self; while repentance requires a recognition of our sin. Anytime we are too focused on self, it's always hard to see our sin. We excuse it and are blind to it. The hardening of these unbelievers hearts is obvious as they are only concerned with themselves. This preoccupation with self makes it impossible to notice God or the need to repent.

Taking it Home:

1. It's not hard to look around our world and see injustices that we want to end. This is how God feels when he sees the great injustice of sin and wickedness. He wants it finally dealt with and gone forever. Knowing that even at our best, we are still sinful at times, how can we gain more of God's heart for holiness, so that we desire to live free from sin today?