

Read Revelation 18

There is a threefold message implicit in these words of Zechariah 2:6, in the light of the context:

- (1) It is Israel's privilege to leave Babylon. They do not *have* to remain. Therefore, they should return and participate in that which God is doing in Jerusalem.
- (2) They are no longer to be identified with Babylon and its ways but with God and Jerusalem.
- (3) Babylon is doomed to terrible destruction (2:8–9; see Jeremiah 51 for a graphic description of Babylon's coming downfall, with repeated admonitions to flee).

Therefore, Israel must not get caught up in Babylon's ways and in her fate. God is going to destroy those nations that have plundered Israel, of whom Babylon is the chief representative.¹

1. How does this relate to contemporary Christianity in light of Revelation 18?

2. Seeing that the passage in Zechariah goes on to talk about other nations also being redeemed as God's portion, how does this calling out of Babylon relate to the world at large?

¹ Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill, eds., [*The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 912.

Jesus was the one who was glorified in his death and resurrection (Mark 13:26). Similarly, Paul says that in Christ we behold the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). In this way, Jesus fulfils Zechariah's hope for God's return to his people.

Zechariah's vision of an uncontainable Jerusalem finds its fulfilment in Jesus. In him the structures of Israel's faith are greatly expanded. The gathering is no longer to a plot of real estate in the Middle East, but to the new temple, which in the first instance is Jesus (e.g. Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 1:14; 2:19–21; 4:20–24), then the church, of which he is the keystone. Jerusalem comes to represent heaven itself (Gal. 4:26–27; Heb. 12:22). Rev. 21 draws on Ezekiel and Zechariah in its portrayal of a figure who measures the 'length and width' of the new Jerusalem with a measuring rod. The glory of God resides in this holy city (21:1–2, 4–5, 19–21, 24–26; 22:5). Indeed, temple, city and land are merged into one picture that conveys the reality of God's presence with his people (cf. Rev. 21:22, which states there is no temple in the new Jerusalem, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple).

Christians live in the now-and-not-yet period between the two comings of Jesus, and Zechariah's imperatives are readily applicable today. First, Christians are to flee from Babylon. In Rev. 18, Babylon is a prostitute who deceives the nations. Babylon represents an anti-God world that seduces people to live for themselves rather than for God. Babylon is attractive. Many exiles had become wealthy and comfortable in Babylon and did not want to return. The call is the same today:

‘Come out of her, my people,’
so that you will not share in her sins. (Rev. 18:4)

This theme will be traced further in the ‘Explanation’ of the seventh vision in chapter 5.

Secondly, singing and rejoicing is an appropriate response now that God has come in Christ as God’s people give voice to the joy of knowing him (e.g. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:15; Heb. 2:12; Jas 5:13; Rev. 5:9). Christians have every reason to sing (cf. Acts 16:25). Furthermore, now is the time when those from the nations are joining themselves to the Lord. Jesus envisaged this in Mark 13:27, as he promised to send out his messengers to gather his elect from the four winds. This gathering will conclude at Jesus’ return (2 Thess. 2:1). There is an exclusiveness as well as an inclusiveness to this, and the basis of inclusion is whether people are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith (cf. Acts 15:14).²

Read Revelation 6:9 through Revelation 8:1.

In light of the similar elements in Revelation 7, where all different nations are seen as the people of God, and so identified by the tribes of Israel, the need for judgment, as seen in the cries from under the altar in Revelation 6, what does that tell us about the relationship between the impending final judgment of Babylon in Zechariah and the silence called in Heaven in Revelation 8:1?

2 Anthony R. Petterson, [*Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*](#), ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 25, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 134–135.

עָוַר *‘āwar* – verb – to blind, to arouse, to awaken

The Hebrew verb *‘āwar* sometimes means “to be blind.” It occurs using this semantic range five times in the OT. In the literal sense, the Babylonians gouged out the eyes of King Zedekiah immediately after murdering his sons in front of him, thus guaranteeing that the last thing he would ever see was this terrible event. Zedekiah was then chained and imprisoned in Babylon until his death (2 Ki. 25:7; Jer. 39:7; 52:11). Used metaphorically, *‘āwar* speaks of the blinding of one’s judgment which occurs to an individual who accepts a bribe (Exo. 23:8; Deut. 16:19).

The verb *‘āwar* usually is defined as “to be awake,” “to awaken oneself,” “to arouse” or “to set in motion.” Pertaining to humans and other living creatures, a person can be awakened from a fitful sleep (Zech. 4:1); however, Job recognized that no one can be stirred out of the sleep of death (Job 14:12). No reasonable person would dare awaken mighty Leviathan from his sleep for fear of his angry response (Job 41:10). Also, the lover’s heart is awakened in anticipation of affection (S.S. 5:2).

Inanimate objects are commanded to awake in the OT. Items such as the north wind (S.S. 4:16), a “dumb stone” symbolizing an idol (Hab. 2:19), fire from an oven (Hos. 7:4), a great whirlwind of evil (Jer. 25:32), a sword (Zech. 13:7) and musical instruments (Ps. 57:8) are awakened.

The LORD can be requested to awaken in anger against one’s enemies (Ps. 7:6) and to pay attention to his servants (Ps. 44:23). He remains an integral participant in the history of his created world. For example, the LORD forewarned that He would awaken the Babylonian army who would then attack Israel from the north (Jer. 6:22; 50:41). The LORD caused Cyrus to let the Babylonian exiles from Judah return to their homeland (2 Chr. 36:22; Ezra 1:1). Elsewhere, the LORD stirred up the pagan lovers of the

promiscuous sisters, Samaria and Jerusalem, to turn against them (Ezek. 23:22f). He also caused the Medes to rise up against the Babylonians (Isa. 13:17; Jer. 50:9, 41; 51:11).

Used metaphorically, *ʿāwar* occurs where Israel is requested to awaken from her spiritual sleep and return to the Covenant (Isa. 52:1). Hell itself stirred in anticipatory excitement to the impending entrance of the king of Babylon (Isa. 14:9).

BDB³ 734, KB⁴ 2:802,
NIDOTTE⁵ 3:356–57,
STRONG⁶ 5786,
TWOT⁷ 2:655.⁸

3 BDB Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979.

4 KB Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994.

5 NIDOTTE Van Gemeren, Willem A. *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

6 STRONG Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible*.

7 TWOT Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

8 Thoralf Gilbrant, [עֹוֹר](#), *The Old Testament Hebrew-English Dictionary*, The Complete Biblical Library (WORDsearch, 1998).