

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 30TH–DECEMBER 1ST, 2024 // REVELATION

FALLEN IS BABYLON (REVELATION 18:1–3)

This chapter continues the vision of Chapter 17, and records what three angels have to say about the end of Babylon the Great.

- There are two vantage points for Babylon's fall—the heavenly perspective (vs. 1–8) and the earthly perspective (vs. 9–24).
 - Chapter 18 is a “dirge” (a funeral song) that laments the fall of the final evil city of humanity.
- The first angel “illuminated” the earth with his splendor (similar to Luke 2:9) and had “great authority” from God.
- He makes a powerful declaration—all human civilization has come to an end.
 - All that's left are evil spirits. V. 2 doesn't present a theology of haunted buildings. It simply shows the demonic influence of the city and the fact that humans will be completely removed.

Verse 3 provides the reasons this great city and influencer of culture must fall and be judged.

- First, “all the nations have drunk the wine of her sexual immorality.”
- This city and culture will influence the entire world to sin, be idolatrous, and worship the Antichrist.
- Those with great influence will be held responsible for how that influence is stewarded!

Secondly, Babylon must fall because “the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her.”

- This means that in the last days, the leaders of the world will follow the Antichrist and worship him (13:8).
- Finally, Babylon must fall because the “merchants of the earth have grown wealthy from her sensuality and excess.”

This pictures materialism, comfort, and sensual gratification as having the power to bring wealth to those who offer services that appeal to humanity's lusts of the flesh.

- This isn't a condemnation of business, commerce, and trade, only commerce and trade done unethically, unjustly, and at the expense of “human lives” (v. 13).
- How we make our money matters to God.

REAPING DESTRUCTION (REVELATION 18:4–8)

Another angel issues a warning to the people of God to “come out of her.”

- This is more instruction to the reader to be on guard against worldliness and the attitude and value system of Babylon.
- This is a warning for God's people to remove ourselves from “Antichrist culture.”
- This doesn't mean we literally shun urban life or modern technology.

Scripture doesn't teach Christians to be isolated and never engage in our culture.

- Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:15–16 to not isolate ourselves, but to let our lights shine before people so they can see God in us.
- However, Scripture does tell us to be careful not to engage in elements of culture that are sinful, immoral, godless, and idolatrous.
- 2 Cor. 6:14–16 (ESV)

The angels declare that this city and culture will be repaid double for her deeds (v. 6)—all the injustice, corruption, and violence against God's people result in double judgment.

- What we plant will grow into something and we will reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).
- The beautiful thing about grace is that we can still receive God's forgiveness and redemption despite what we've sown!

The Bible says, “pride comes before destruction” (Pr. 16:18), and here we see it's no different.

- V. 7 mentions three boastful statements of this wicked city.
- 1. “I sit as a queen”—showing it will be the finest city in existence.
- 2. “I am not a widow”—showing that all the world's kings will be her lovers.
- 3. “I will never see grief”—showing she believed there would never be consequences for her immorality and wickedness.
- For this arrogance, her end will be swift (v. 8).
- It would have been difficult for John's readers to imagine the “Babylon” of their day (Rome) falling, but it did.
- This is a reminder that human civilization, in all its wonder and glory, is temporary.

MATERIALISM MOURNED (REVELATION 18:9–20)

In this part of the “funeral dirge,” we hear the lamenting of 3 groups affected by Babylon's fall:

1. Kings: modern-day political leaders and those in positions of power and prominence.
2. Merchants: corrupt business owners, salesmen, and the marketplace.
3. Mariners: modern-day movers of product, brokers, and deliverers of products that capitalize on humanity's lusts and desires.

Imagine each of these groups witnessing the destruction of this great city at the hands of divine judgment.

- There is a realization that their way of life is ending and the torment that has come upon this city will also happen to them.
- These 3 groups (Kings, Merchants, Mariners) mourn via a 3-part dirge (“Woe”; crying out to the city; acknowledging how quickly it ends).

The kings will mourn because they realize this is the end to their reign and great wealth.

- We get a picture of how power will corrupt world leaders in the last days—no thought of anyone but themselves!
- The merchants will mourn because no one will buy (or even care about) their cargo anymore (v. 11).
- The vanity of materialism will be exposed.

The list of marketplace items in vs. 12–13 symbolize modern markets as well.

- Jewelry, clothing, furniture, interior design, fragrances, food, animals (vehicles for transportation), and human slaves.
 - These are the things people will worship and die for!
 - The Mariners mourn because their trade is gone and now so is Babylon (vs. 15–19).
- The doom of Babylon is examined from a very different perspective in v. 20.
- Believers are told to “rejoice,” not lament the destruction of evil.
 - Not that we are to rejoice in human suffering, but we are to rejoice in the fact that all that is opposed to God will someday end.
 - There's a reason why this is difficult for many modern Christians to stomach...

A CULTURE DESTROYED (REVELATION 18:21–24)

John now sees a “mighty angel” pick up a millstone and toss it in the sea as a symbol.

- This illustrates that the city and culture that was opposed to God and oppressed and killed God's people will sink like a heavy stone.
- It also symbolizes that this is permanent—“it will be found no more.”
- God is judging Babylon because a large injustice has taken place.

God is love, but God is also just—imagine our own children being slaughtered!

- Not only will all materialism and political power fall, v. 22 shows that culture will fall as well.
- The entertainment people live for, the music that shapes our beliefs and values, and the art that's been used for evil instead of good will all be destroyed.

The place that so much of humanity has called home will also lose its light (v. 23).

- All the comforts of domestic life will end, and the family structure will also collapse (“groom and bride will never be heard in you again”).
- As marriage, the home, and the family continue to be redefined and distorted in these last days, we must remember God will ultimately judge this wickedness.

All these institutions were designed to work for God's glory and the good of all people—but humanity in their sin has distorted them.

- Business, commerce, art, and family are designed to be catalysts for God's Kingdom, but they were “seduced” by false teaching and distorted by sin.
- Now this city and culture must pay the price for misleading so many and killing the followers of God (v. 24).

“THE NATIONS WERE DECEIVED BY YOUR SORCERY (PHARMAKIA)...”

This could mean the lure of commercial Babylon is just as intoxicating as a drug.

- Or it could mean that one aspect of Babylon is her ability to deceive and lead astray by means of drug intoxication and addiction.
- 17% of Americans battled substance abuse in the past year (doubled in the last 20 years).

WHAT IS SEEN IS TEMPORARY.

- This world, even with all its glory, beauty, pleasure, and culture, is passing away.
- Culture, art, comfort, pleasure, and material wealth are not inherently evil, but often come at too high a price—slavery of human souls and hostility to God's ways.
- We must guard our souls from becoming seduced by the lies of materialism.

THE MYTH OF MATERIALISM

- “A preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual, relational or spiritual things.”
- Myth #1: Peace and contentment can be attained by what you own.
- Myth #2: Only the rich struggle with greed, consumerism, and materialism.
- Myth #3: As a Christian, if I work hard for my money, I can do whatever I want with it.

MYTH BUSTERS

- Peace and contentment are given as gifts from God, not purchased or earned.
- All our hearts are idol factories, regardless of our wealth, age, or social standing.
- As Christians, we are “not [our] own” (1 Cor. 6:19)—neither is our money or possessions.

“COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE...”

- We're called to leave behind the ideas that:
 - “Just because I want it, I need to have it.”
 - “If it feels good, do it!”
 - “As long as it's making money, the ends justify the means.”
 - “Popularity, beauty, and material success will last forever.”

BABYLON PROOFING YOUR CHRISTMAS.

1. Set a reasonable budget (and limit) for gifts.
2. Focus more on the worship of Christ (family advent devotions) and time with family/friends than on stuff and/or commercial experiences.
3. Teach your children the joy and beauty of generosity. Before getting more, go through what you already have and ask, “Do I actually use this?” If not, give it away to others who may need it!