

THURSDAY 21ST DECEMBER

Read: Revelation 18:21-19:16

'And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.' **Revelation 19:9**

The passage today starts with a dramatic image as the angel casts a millstone into the sea as a picture of the destruction of Babylon which echoes Jesus' words for the consequence of 'causing children to stumble' in Mark 9:42. This judgement on Babylon then lists all the things that will cease to be as a result. The things themselves are not the issue, but rather the desire for them at the expense of commitment to God.

On my commute to work, I see all manner of vehicles and am intrigued by the odd supercar that passes me by. Increasingly it seems to me that the more expensive the car the louder the colour. This week I saw a bright orange Aston Martin and I suppose the reference to Babylon is a bit like that. The car itself is not the issue, but the heart that lies behind it. It is a classic status symbol that says, "Look at how well I have done in life to be able to drive this!" The world we live in judges success by wealth or power or both. If you have certain possessions or go on certain holidays you are successful. People dream of the life they could have if only they had a bit more money, a bigger house, a better car etc. And yet, this passage of revelation warns us to reflect on our Babylonian desires and reminds us of the futility of it all.

Babylon represents the human denial of God and movement away from God to serve ourselves. This passage challenges us to rethink. God is our purpose and those who cannot see that will have their lives exposed as folly as they chase the dreams of this world. All the things of the earth will disappear and then what are we left with before God?

In the passage, as all these things are destroyed and Jesus enters the vision in glory and power, we are reminded that for those who turn to Him in humility and repentance there is an invite to the wedding supper of the Lamb, a true measure of success in life. What an honour for us to be able to have a relationship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, a treasure far beyond any possessions of this world—even an Aston Martin!

Let us pray: *Forgive me, Lord, when I am more focussed on the desires and loves of this world rather than desire for You. Create in me a yearning for You so that my heart's desires may be fully aligned with Yours and my ambition is to see Your kingdom come. Amen.*

Canon Stephen Whittaker, Diocesan Secretary.