



gracefellowship

Revelation
April 14, 2019
The Fall of Babylon

:: Revelation 17, 18 & 19:1-10

Introduction:

Last week, if you weren't able to be with us, we looked at the final judgments of God poured out against the earth and the kingdom of Satan under the authority of the Anti-Christ. God systematically judged the earth as 7 angels poured out 7 bowls full of His wrath onto the world. At the end of chapter 16 we saw that the kingdom of Satan had been destroyed, making way for God to bring His Kingdom fully to earth. Now what we will see today is the details behind the fall of the kingdom of the beast, known as Babylon.

My goal today is to cover 2 ½ chapters that describe the city of Babylon, its fall and the response to seeing the world system destroyed from the perspective of followers of the beast and followers of Jesus.

As we move into Easter next week I want us to see the destruction that comes with final judgment prior to celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and then return to this book after Easter able to finish up the book by looking at the entrance of God's Kingdom and the marriage of Jesus to His Church.

With that in mind, this morning I have asked 2 people to help read through these large chunks of text for us. I won't be able to touch on every verse in my message, but I want us to hear each verse so we get the details of the story of the fall of Babylon as it unfolds.

(Two people will read Revelation 17 and 18 from stage.)

In Revelation 17:1-6 John is told he is going to be shown the punishment of the "great prostitute," the kingdom of the Anti-Christ and the world system that has followed its wicked ways. But what John is shown astonishes him because he sees the kingdom of the world in radiance, splendor and power.

:: Revelation 17:3-5

3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

5 The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Babylon is represented as a woman dressed in scarlet and purple, identifying her with the beast and with power.

Then the angel explains the mystery to John. To be fair, I read 4 different commentaries this week on this chapter and 3 of them said this may be the most difficult section of Revelation to interpret. The angel even tells John, "this calls for a mind with wisdom."(vs. 9)

And you guys are stuck with me...so, good luck!

We have already seen in chapter 13 that the Anti-Christ is described as a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns.

The angel says the beast once was, now is not and yet will come up out of the Abyss. (vs. 8)

If you heard the message I preached on the anti-Christ, you may remember that this figure, empowered by Satan, will mimic the actions of Jesus- even to the point of being killed and returning to life. However, unlike the Messiah who comes down from heaven to set up an eternal Kingdom, the angel says the beast comes up from the Abyss and will go to eternal destruction.

Here John is told the 7 heads of the beast are 7 hills.

7 heads = 7 hills: The city of Rome is represented this way, so John's audience would have immediately thought of Rome and equated Babylon with their current setting.

The spirit of Babylon is found in every era and in every nation that is not given over to the ways of God.

7 heads also = 7 kings: This is probably better stated as kingdoms.

5 have fallen

1 is

1 is still to come

Next we are told that the beast has 10 horns. Horns are a way of stating something has power. There are two ways to approach these horns.

The 10 Horns of the Beast

- 1. Represent 10 actual kingdoms who will join the Anti-Christ in rebelling against God and leading the nations away from Him.**
- 2. They are symbolic, designating the fullness of Anti-Christ's power.**

“The ten kings are purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on the earth which are to be made subservient to Anti-Christ.” – George Eldon Ladd

I am not going to attempt to make a bold statement one way or the other as to what these horns represent, but I can make a bold statement about what they do because the angel tells us exactly what their roles are in the final days.

:: Revelation 17:13-14

13 They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

14 They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

The kingdoms of the earth will be pawns for the Anti-Christ to use for his purposes to make war against the God of heaven.

But before the nations can ever fully assemble for this war something curious happens: look at Revelation 17:15-18

:: Revelation 17:15-18

15 Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.

16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled.

18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

The Anti-Christ and the kingdoms of the world will turn on the prostitute- Babylon. In other words, there will be civil war and the Anti-Christ will turn on his own city and his own people. If you want something to equate this to from modern history, think about Hitler prior to WWII. The first people Hitler conquered were his own countrymen. Hitler didn’t love all Germans; he loved power! He eliminated all his political rivals in order to gain a position of fear over everyone else, forcing them to join his plans for global domination.

The Anti-Christ will love power and will turn on his own kingdom in order to maintain it. But notice what John says in verse 17, “God has put it into their hearts to accomplish His purpose...” This act of aggression against his own kingdom is part of the plan of God. The city of Babylon will fall, and needs to fall, because of it’s rebellion against God. As we move into chapter 18 we will see this kingdom fall and the turmoil that brings to the people of the world.

We will not have time this morning to go through every verse of this chapter, but I want you to see some key elements.

In 18:1-3 we see that Babylon has only become useful for housing demons, impure spirits and unclean animals. All the nations of the earth drunk the wine of her adulteries- in other words, the world was led away from God in order to pursue the pleasures of sinfulness and to indulge in excessive luxuries.

Next, look at verse 4 with me.

:: Revelation 18:4-5

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “ ‘Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;

5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

The riches of this world and the enticement of its pleasures can often pull us away from obedience to God. We get sucked into the same pursuits as people who do not fear God. Here the people of God are commanded to come out of Babylon. Babylon doesn't just represent a city during the end times, it is a way of talking about the world system or the kingdoms of the world in opposition to God. John's audience would have read this and associated it with Rome. They were not to embrace the pleasures of Rome when it stood against the Kingdom of God. In the same way, we need to be wise about seeing Babylon, and the world system in our own country today and pursue God rather than pursuing the American Dream as god.

When we are told to “come out” that doesn't mean we leave altogether. As Christians we are called to remain in the world as Jesus' faithful witness, but not to embrace the sinfulness of the world.

This is a call to spiritual separation rather than physical separation.

“In essence this is a clarion call to holiness, a separation from the wicked ways of the world and a separation unto loyalty and obedience to God.”

- J. Scott Duvall

Following Christ always includes two actions: turning away from something in order to turn toward something greater. As Christians, we turn away from sin and self to daily turn toward the holiness of Jesus. There may be things today we need to identify in our personal lives to turn away from in order to pursue Jesus.

If you are not following Jesus today, the invitation to you is found in these simple verses: Come out of the empty, hollow, things of this life that promise you fulfillment and embrace the salvation offered to you by Jesus who promises to give you abundant life. In John 10:10 Jesus tells us the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but He has come to give us life to the full.

Christians, walk away from the things in this world that are distracting you from following Jesus, being changed by Him and being on mission with Him.

If you're not a Christian, walk toward Jesus today by committing your life solely to Him and abandoning the things that will never fully satisfy the ultimate desires of your heart. Jesus is better!

As we get back to Revelation 18 we will see the people of the nations who have been caught up in the worship of the Anti-Christ and who have benefitted from his kingdom now be forced to watch the destruction of their way of life. This passage was read for us at the beginning of the message, so I'm not going to go back and read it all again, but John describes people watching the fall of Babylon from a distance who are terrified by the fall of the city and their way of life. And the vast majority of why they are so upset is that their livelihood is tied up with the system of the world.

The world will mourn over the fall of Babylon due to the selfishness of the loss of commercial wealth.

The only image I can come up with to help us see this in our mind's eye is to ask you to think of what it felt like in our country on September 11, 2001 when the twin towers fell. We watched in shock and disbelief and horror at the scenes of only two buildings falling out of the NY skyline. In one day God is going to bring judgment against the entire world and the kingdom of the Anti-Christ will fall. People will watch in horror as their world crumbles around them. The whole earth will be shocked and in disbelief. To complete the image of the destruction of Babylon, John gives us one more picture story to show the completeness of the collapse of the kingdom of Satan.

:: Revelation 18:21-24

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

22 The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.

23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.

24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

There is one other perspective we need to see as we close up this morning. While the followers of the Anti-Christ, who benefitted from his kingdom, will be in

mourning, the followers of Jesus will respond to the fall of this wicked kingdom differently.

:: Revelation 19:1-10

1 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

2 for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

3 And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!”

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

9 Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”

When Babylon falls and the kingdom of Satan is destroyed, the people of God rejoice. But I want us to understand this properly...

We rejoice when God judges evil, not when people suffer.

“God is to be praised for his just and true judgments as reflections of his righteous and faithful character.” – J. Scott Duvall