

**8/7/2022 “Weeping and Rejoicing Over Babylon’s Fall”
Revelation 18**

Good morning my name is John Marc Wiemann, I have the privilege of being the lead pastor here at Cornerstone. It is so wonderful to be back with you here at Cornerstone. Thank you so much for the 3-month sabbatical that I was able to enjoy, to travel, to visit with family and friends, to study, read, and write. Someone said to me this week, “Can’t wait to hear your sermon this Sunday since you had 3 months to write it!”

A special thank you to our elders who so faithfully preached God’s Word each Sunday of my sabbatical. As well as thank you former Cornerstone associate pastors Shane Sander and Curtis Solomon who also came and preached. I was asked by family and friends and pastors of other churches if I was worried about the church in my absence, and I could tell them I honestly was not because we have such committed and capable men who serve as elders. And thank you Cornerstone family for being here and learning from them and encouraging them in their leadership.

If you started attending Cornerstone while I was on sabbatical, you can watch or listen to the Revelation sermon series by going to our website Cornerstoneca.org and click on Sermons and you will see the Revelation sermon series. You can also listen by using our Cornerstone phone app that is available thru Apple Itunes, Google Play, or the Amazon App Store.

If this is your first time here, we always tell our guests three things...

How is it that one event can make some people incredibly sad and others extremely happy? How is that one experience can make some people very frightened or disappointed and others tremendously excited or thankful? Take for an example a roller coaster at Six Flags Magic Mountain amusement park in Valencia. For some of you, that thought of getting on a roller coaster there excites you and for others the thought of getting on that roller coaster terrifies you.

Or how about a baseball game, like the San Francisco Giants vs the Los Angeles Dodgers. I guarantee you, that no matter which team wins, some of you will be happy while others will be disappointed. One event, two different responses.

We see this often in an election year in our country. People are happy their candidate got elected, but others are sad that their candidate did not get elected.

One event, two different responses, two different reactions. In our text today, in Revelation chapter 18 we will see very different responses to one event. And the question for you this morning is this: What will your response be to this promised event in Revelation 18?

Let’s read Revelation 18...

In Revelation chapter 18 we see very different responses to one event.

The main point of our text is: God’s justice in judging Babylon will be lamented by the world and celebrated by citizens of heaven. What will your response be to this promised event in Revelation 18? How does your response to this God ordained event in Revelation 18 reveal where your hope is, your desires, your focus?

In this chapter, John heard four voices.

The voice of condemnation v. 1-3

The call of separation v. 4-8

The response of lamentation v. 9-19

The response of celebration v. 20-24

The last two voices reveal the two responses.

Now by way of quick review, let's consider 5 key questions about the book of Revelation.

The Five "W"s of Revelation

WHO? John, the disciple of Jesus and author of the gospel of John, as well as 1, 2, and 3 John.

WHAT? A written record of the revelation given to Jesus by God the Father and communicated to John by an angel.

WHERE? The tiny island of Patmos, about forty miles off the coast of Asia Minor, where John had been exiled for his faith.

WHEN? About AD 95 or 96, making Revelation one of the last books of the Bible to be written.

WHY? To reveal Christ in all of His glory, to assure believers that God's perfect justice will be served, to exhort them to not compromise with the world, and encourage them to persevere in faith.

Chapter 1 verse 1 introduces this book as "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" since it comes from Him and centers on Him. It begins with a vision of Christ's glory, wisdom, and power in chapter 1, and portrays His authority over the entire church in chapters 2–3. He is the Lamb who was slain and we see in chapters 4-5, Jesus is the only one declared worthy to open the book of God's judgment. God's righteous wrath is poured out upon the whole earth in chapters 6–18 in the form of the seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments. Although those judgments will be worldwide in scope, they will focus particularly on the Antichrist's world empire, known as Babylon.

Then in chapter 19 Jesus Christ returns in power to judge His enemies and in chapter 20 to establish His millennial rule and execute the Great White throne judgment, and in chapter 21 to establish the new creation and eternal state.

We praise Jesus for what He has done for us on the cross by taking away our sins, and we praise Him for what He is doing for us by interceding for us in heaven. Revelation gives us another reason to praise Him—what He will do for us in the future. As such, Christ remains the center of our worship, the focus of our obedience, and the source of our blessing—both now and in eternity to come.

Shall we close in prayer?! (Pause) Wait, we haven't studied our text yet!

During the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be able to build the greatest commercial empire the world has ever known. Chapter 18 describes God's destruction of commercial Babylon. And with the destruction of the satanic last and greatest human empire, the stage is set for the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 19 which we will see in coming weeks.

In Revelation chapter 18 John describes the four voices he heard. The first voice that John hears is:

I. The Voice of Condemnation

Look at verses 1-2...

John sees a glorious and mighty angel that descends from heaven to proclaim the effects of Babylon's judgment by God. This impressive messenger possesses "great authority" and "glory" that lights up the earth, reinforcing the credibility of his proclamation. The angel's message is loud and clear: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

The word "great" is used ten times in chapter 18...

What makes something great? Some of us remember TV commercials for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes cereal with Tony the Tiger. And Tony always ends the commercial by saying, and you can say it with me now, "Kellogg's Frosted Flakes are grrrrreat!" Presumably, Tony meant Frosted Flakes tasted great but not that they were great for your health.

Babylon is called a "great city" five times in the chapter (verses 10, 16, 18, 19, 21). It may be one city, but its influence will be worldwide. You see, as the Antichrist's capital city, Babylon will represent his whole commercial empire. Babylon is powerful, influential, wealthy, and self-satisfied. The Antichrist thinks he is great and in total control. But the truth he is not.

In verse 2, the desolation of Babylon is described as a dark place where there are demons, scavenger birds and rodents. The point is that Babylon will become a dead ghost town with no inhabitants, an unclean place unfit for life.

Why? What is the reason for Babylon's condemnation? Look at verse 3...

The all-encompassing terms "all the nations, the kings of the earth, and the merchants of the earth" reveal that Babylon will seduce the entire world.

Verse 4 mentions her "sensuality: and verse 7 says "she glorified herself and lived sensuously." To "live sensuously" is to live proudly in luxury while others go without. It means to make possessions and pleasures the most important things in life, and to ignore the needs of others.

Honestly, how many of us are tempted by what the world has to offer? Are there times in your life when you see luxurious, sensual living and say, "I want some of that!" Christians in every age need to heed the warning of 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

How easy it is to become fascinated by the things the world has to offer. Like a person sipping a delicious mixed cocktail drink and wanting more and more, we can soon find ourselves drinking in the idolatry of the world and getting intoxicated on it. The world system that opposes Christ has always been with us, and we must beware of its subtle influence. That is why the second voice is the call to separation.

II. The call to separation

Look at verses 4-5...

The use of allos (another of the same kind) suggests that the speaker is an angel like the one in verse 1. The message he proclaims, "Come out of her, my people," is a call for God's people to disentangle themselves from the world system.

Why are believers to flee Babylon? Verse 4 so that they will not participate in her sins.

Babylon has committed sins of self-glory, pride, idolatry, immorality, and the exploitation of others – including the persecution of believers. Her sins are so immense in their extent and severity that verse 5 says her sins “have piled up to heaven.”

The second reason to be separate and distinct is provided in verse 4, that God’s people might be spared the terrible plagues He will send on Babylon. God had patiently endured the growing sins of the evil system, but now the time had come for His wrath to be poured out. He will judge Babylon for the way she persecuted and treated His own people.

The angel’s request in verse 6 that God give back to Babylon double “according to her deeds” (literally “double the double things”) is a request that Babylon’s punishment fit her crimes. Double has been her iniquity, double will be her punishment.

Then the angel notes in verse 8 that in “one day her plagues will come.” Babylon’s destruction will not be progressive. The wicked city will be instantly destroyed.

We have heard the voice of condemnation, and the voice of separation. Next, we hear the voice of lamentation.

III. The response of lamentation v. 9-19

John heard a new sound—this time coming from the earth. Loud lamentations poured forth from those who placed their faith, hope, and love in that last great Babylonian empire.

Verse 9...

Verse 11...

Verse 17b-18-19, “And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ ‘And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”

We hear this loud wailing and lamentation from three groups who have profited the most from Antichrist’s economic empire known as Babylon: First, the kings who gained power and wealth; Second, the merchants who shared the worldwide markets she created; and Third, the ship captains and sailors who carried her cargo over all the world. They have now lost all that Babylon had provided, so their sorrow is not for Babylon’s fall but for their own economic loss. God had brought an end to their life of luxury and wealth. Even their employees who make their living by the sea weep in verses 17–18!

What is ironic is that the world’s leaders and merchants are mourning the loss of their sales. They are despondent that no one is buying their merchandise, but they belonged to a system that refused to sell their goods to any Christian who did not take the mark of the beast. “You are not allowed to buy anything we sell to you, go away from us, in fact we are going to kill you.” But now the tables are turned.

In verse 9...

The terms here are identical to account in Genesis when Sodom and Gomorrah was burned for sexual perversion and the people lament over her burning. That tells us something very important. When we see the sexual immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah we might say, “Of course their judgment was due for their perversion of God’s design and command.” But here Babylon is being destroyed for her materialism, for the people are greedy,

discontent and will do whatever is right in their own eyes to get ahead. So, that tells us if they are being destroyed in the same way that God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, that tells us that materialism is just as dangerous in God's eyes as sexual immorality. It just as detested by God.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:25, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

As 1 Timothy 6:9-10 reminds us, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Money is not evil, it is "the love of money" that is the root of evil. Not surprisingly, when Babylon the great world empire begins to crumble, her lovers - those enslaved to her power and pleasures - will begin to wail in anguish. The objects of their absolute devotion - the Antichrist and his empire - will be crushed before their eyes. At the same time the objects of their hatred - Jesus Christ and His people - will be exalted by God.

The word translated "weep" in verse 9 could be translated "to wail." They are crying out in an inconsolable way. What they love the most they are losing. And it all happens very fast. In verse eight it says the fall of Babylon comes in "a one day". In the remainder of the chapter this is shortened to "one hour" and repeated in verses 10, 17, and 19.

Verses 12-13 provide a list of twenty-eight items or categories of merchandise that brought wealth to these kings, merchants, and shipmasters. Gold, silver, and precious stones led the list. Then costly garments and very expensive wood and bronze and iron and marble used for decorative cabinets and other luxury furnishings.

Imported spices were greatly sought in that day, both for foods and for personal use as perfumes. Last on the list in verse 13, and most disturbing, is "slaves and human lives." Literally "bodies, and the souls of people." People will be treated like pieces of furniture, bought and sold, used and abused.

All three groups, the kings, the merchants, the shipmasters and sailors are distraught because their shipping trade has been completely crippled and their profits have vanished. Keep in mind that Revelation 18 was written almost two thousand years ago, and even today it is estimated that an overwhelming majority of material goods, around 80 percent, are transported by ships!

But notice all three groups see "the smoke of her burning" and stand "at a distance." We see it in verse 9, 15 and 17. They stand at a distance, but they don't want to get too close and get burned themselves. They are lamenting not Babylon but themselves; they have lost their livelihood. Babylon's sudden ruin is their ruin; their future has gone with the destruction of the "great city." But there is no remorse and no repentance, no confession of sin and turning to faith in Christ. There is only sorrow for what has been taken away.

They remember the glory days as they cry out at the end of verse 18, "What city is like the great city?" The sailors go further in their sorrow, throwing "dust on their heads" as a sign of mourning.

Verse 14...

"The fruit you longed for" refers to all these luxuries that are now gone. The splendor of these expensive goods has vanished and you will "no longer find them." They are gone forever, a warning to any society (like ours!) given over to the folly of conspicuous consumption. The old adage, "I've never seen a funeral hearse driving to the cemetery towing a U-Haul trailer" or "You can't take it with you" is still oh so true.

It brings to mind the parable in Luke 12 that Jesus told of a very productive farmer who became greedy. Look at Luke 12:15-21...

Like the greedy, self-interested farmer, the judgment is coming quickly on Babylon.

We have seen the voice of condemnation, the voice of separation, the voice of lamentation and now, fourth:

IV. The response of celebration

Verse 20...

Heaven will have quite a different perspective on Babylon's judgment than that of Antichrist's earthly followers. The angel calls on the redeemed saints to rejoice over Babylon's fall, because God has pronounced judgment for them against her. The long-awaited moment of vindication, retribution, and vengeance, for which the martyred Tribulation believers prayed back in Revelation 6:9–10 and for which all the redeemed hoped, has arrived. Heaven rejoices, not over the damnation of sinners, but because of the triumph of righteousness, the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the elimination of His enemies, and the arrival of Christ's kingdom on the earth.

Finally, as if to remind any who might feel God's complete destruction of the world system is too extreme or unjust or simply uncalled for, the angel reminds us at the end of verse 23 and in verse 24 why Babylon had to go. Judgment was needed "because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."

Friends we have seen the voice of condemnation, the call to separation, the response of lamentation and the sound of celebration. So, what will be your response to this promised event in Revelation 18? Will it be lamentation or celebration? Will it be condemnation or salvation?

Are you a Christian? A child of God? John 1:12 tells us... Jesus said in 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. If you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, come to Him now.

And if you are a Christian, are you living a distinct life from the world's values?

Nobody wants the stock market to crash, the PG&E power grid to fail, your business or your employer to go bankrupt, or an earthquake to level our city. But friends, I am afraid that too much of our lives depends on the world continuing on just as it is. As believers we have a different King and belong to a different Kingdom. Our mission is to know Christ and make Him known. We don't isolate ourselves from the world, we engage the world and lovingly share the good news with non-Christians. This is not our ultimate home, so we don't simply live for here and now, we live for eternity. We need to see life from God's perspective, from heaven's view as we have today from Revelation 18 where the Lord explains what is going to happen.

Philippians 3:18-21 reminds us, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

Let's pray...