

Revelation 17-18 • "Fallen is Babylon the Great!"

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

We're in the Book of Revelation, so let's open our Bibles there. Revelation chapter 17. This is a challenging chapter, I'll just tell you ahead of time. I mean, the book of Revelation is challenging all by itself. And that's one of the reasons why a lot of people really avoid it.

I've talked to a lot of people over the years that just kind of were like, 'yeah, Revelation and not going there. It's just too hard to kind of figure out what's happening.' And this is a challenging chapter and I'll just tell you ahead of time, it has some different interpretations that go along with it.

You probably have learned by being around Calvary Chapel here for a while, that I typically go with a more literal interpretation of things unless the figurative interpretation just frankly makes more sense and a literal one doesn't. And that's kind of the rule of thumb. But Revelation chapters 17 and 18 really kind of go together because they're all about Babylon. And in this case, Babylon, which we've mentioned many times before, was not only a city that existed in the ancient past, but it also stands in the Bible as a type or a personification or a figure of something.

And what that something is mankind's defiance and frankly, his calculated rebellion against the Lord God. So that's kind of what we're going to be talking about tonight and the judgment of that purposeful defiance on the part of man. So. I think we better pray. What do you suppose?

Thank you, Father, for giving us this time tonight to get through this chapter. And it's a challenging one Lord, but I just pray that you'd help us. We pray for your Holy Spirit to bring just an open heart to each one of us to hear your voice, to receive tonight from you and to be equipped with the information that you have provided for us here in this book. Be with us we pray, Father, in Jesus' precious name, Amen.

I think most of you probably know about the historical background related to Babylon. When you read your Bible after the flood, as Noah and his sons and their wives began to repopulate the earth after the global flood. And I think it

was only about maybe three generations later, there was a man who rose up who was said to be a great warrior. He was a pretty incredible guy from a lot of physical standpoints and that sort of thing. But his name was Nimrod and he built a city and that city ended up being Babylon (Genesis 10:8-9).

Now, there's a lot of things that we read about this guy that sound pretty impressive. But at the heart of Nimrod's life was a calculated rebellion against God. And you'll remember that God had said to Noah and his sons go out into the earth. Be fruitful, multiply, spread out and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1).

Well, Nimrod was a man who determined in his heart that he was just simply not going to obey that word of the Lord. And so he built a city and he gathered the people around him and he said, listen, lest we be scattered on the face of the earth, let us just hunker down. Let us just stay here. In fact, let's build a tower and we're going to do it in our own name, in our own authority (Genesis 11:1-9).

And this will be a sign, if you will, a symbol. Of our own determination to, and this is paraphrasing of course, thumb our nose at God and say, we're not going to follow the directives that you have given. In fact, we're going to stay right here. Now you know the story. God ultimately is going to have His way.

So the Lord looks down upon this city that has been built and He says and look what man has done. And together there's really nothing they're not going to be able to do. So He said, let us go down and let us confuse their language. And so that's exactly what the Lord did. And because the people suddenly couldn't understand one another, or at least some groups could, some groups couldn't, they began to separate according to their languages.

And so ultimately, God had His way. He forced them, if you will, to spread out. But He had to. But because they were unwilling to do it out of obedience, He came and forced the issue through the confusing of their languages.

Do you know what's interesting about the name or the city Babylon? It is the single city that is mentioned second most in the Bible to Jerusalem? Babylon is second. It has that much weight in the biblical text.

It is absolutely huge. And it began to take on a characteristic that went beyond simply the city itself, much like Corinth. You've heard me say before that the city of Corinth was so well known for its sexual deviancy, that they began to call people a Corinthian simply as a slur. Whether you'd ever been to the city of Corinth or not, that didn't matter.

If I called you a Corinthian, I was simply calling you a dirty name. Because Corinth had become so connected to that kind of sexual perversion and immorality. The name Babylon began to take on a similar characteristic in that it spoke beyond simply of a physical city. And it began to speak of rebellion.

It began to speak of defiance and so forth. Depravity, if you will. And from what we can tell, chapter 17 here of the book of Revelation speaks of the way mankind has perverted religion and used it for his own purposes. And so what we are looking at in Revelation chapter 17 is the judgment of the religious expression of Babylon.

In other words, this is man's religion. This is mankind. I think religion used to be a much more socially acceptable term. When I read even my books from A.W. Tozer, he passed I think in the early sixties, maybe mid-sixties, and in his books, he uses the word religion synonymously with Christian faith.

And I read through the books and sometimes when I even do my quotes for you guys, I change it. I change it. I substitute faith for religion because that's usually what he means. Today the word religion has become somewhat more of a negative term that I think is frankly more in keeping of what we're going to be looking at here in this chapter.

And that is man's attempt to control this whole thing. To literally create God in his own image. To make up the rules, to make up traditions, to make up a religious system, an organization, a religious organization that he feels comfortable with.

I watched a video recently of a, I don't know what persuasion he was, but it was some kind of a minister of a fairly liberal church. But he was just blatantly saying, I am going to make God who I want God to be. And that is the expression ultimately of manmade religion. We make God in a form that we can believe in, feel good about who isn't offensive, loves everybody all the same. And that includes people who want to continue in a life of sin.

And it doesn't matter. It's okay because we're called to love one another, and because we have that overarching command to love, then we're going to embrace any kind of activity or sinful behavior. It doesn't matter. We're not going to confront anybody. We're going to be tolerant in the name of religion.

Well, that's manmade religion, and that's essentially what is going to come to a head during the time of the great tribulation. And God is going to judge that. So we're going to see that here.

Now, on a side note before we get started, there are some who believe that the literal city of Babylon is going to be rebuilt during the time of the great tribulation. And that it will in fact be kind of a center for the antichrist and his activity during that time. I suppose that's a possibility. But I personally think this chapter more deals with Babylon as a figurative picture, in this case, what it stands for.

So it begins by John writing in verse 1 of chapter 17. *"¹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls" (or who had the seven bowls that were poured out upon the earth) "came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."*

So let's stop there for just a moment. So in this first few verses of the chapter, John is invited to come and literally witness the judgment of this woman who he hasn't necessarily described yet, but he refers to her as the great prostitute and who has lured people into what he says, adultery and sexual immorality.

Now you have to understand something, if we're going to look at this thing figuratively from this standpoint. Although God condemns sexual immorality in its true physical form, sexual immorality and adultery are also pictures of spiritual unfaithfulness. In the Old Testament, God confronted the nation of Israel with their pagan idolatry by referring to them as adulterers.

And that wasn't because of any physical behavior on their part. Pagan idolatry usually did involve physical sexual immorality. But He would refer to spiritual immorality and adultery over and over again. And He would refer to Israel as His wife.

And He would say, *"I am your husband"* (Jeremiah 3:14 NIV). In fact, there's a point where He even says, I sent you away (Jeremiah 3:8). And even with one of the prophets, you know this, he even called this man to take a harlot as a wife so that his life might be a prophetic picture of the relationship between God and Israel (Hosea 1:2). So we see this throughout the Old Testament. There's this thread of consistency where God makes reference to spiritual unfaithfulness as adultery and immorality even speaking of it in a physical way.

Now, I want you to notice he says there in verse 1, *"Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,"* and we know that this is figurative. We know that she isn't literally sitting on water. And the reason we know this is because later on in the chapter, he actually explains what

that means. The angel explains it. In fact, let's do a little skip down to verse 15 with me. If you look down in verse 15, it says, "¹⁵*And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages."*"

So you see, this is why we are taking this figuratively. It's because it's being explained as a figurative picture for us in the scripture. This is a picture again of this woman who is, I believe, religious Babylon, if you will, or the religions of mankind who is sitting on the waters or the multitudes of the nations and peoples and languages in showing that she has a global influence.

She's not limited in her influence. It is global, and that's why she is sitting on many waters. Let's go back up to verse 3, see what else we can learn about this prostitute. It says in verse 3, "³*And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.*" All right, now stop there. This again, is very significant. The woman is literally sitting on the same beast that we saw described in an earlier chapter of Revelation, Revelation 13, which we identified at that time as the antichrist or the beast, the first beast, if you will. And this beast was given as we saw there, power and the ability to rule during the tribulation period.

But I want you to notice that this woman is riding the beast. She's sitting on the beast, and so that's a picture that not only is she being supported by the antichrist, but at this particular juncture, she's actually controlling it. She is in charge. This religious entity of manmade apostate religion during the great tribulation, or at least the early part of the great tribulation, is in control. Or at least appears to be in control. I believe it's because the antichrist is allowing religion to be in control in the first part of the great tribulation. But we're going to see here later on how he's going to put her away, and that's because we know from other passages that the antichrist is going to demand midway in the tribulation to be worshiped.

He's going to put down and put an end to all other worship expressions. And he's going to say, it's me you worship from here on out. So for right now, she's kind of in control. She's sitting upon and controlling this beast, if you will. But notice what else John sees in verse 4 and following. It says:

"⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. ⁵And on her forehead was written a

name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (ESV)

Did you notice that the word abominations was actually used twice in those 2 verses? The word abomination, if you look it up in a Greek dictionary, it says that which is detestable to God. It literally can be translated detestable. So what we're seeing here is that the woman is holding in her hand a cup full of detestable impurities. And her name repeats this idea as well. Notice also her clothing. John describes it here as purple and scarlet and adorned with golden jewels and pearls. So this suggests royalty, literally. And this is always the end result, by the way, of manmade religion. I don't know if you're aware of this.

Whenever man begins to devise a religious organizational scheme, he elevates himself above the masses. We can still see some of this in churches today, actually. You can even see it in the term 'Reverend,' to revere someone who's part of the clergy.

Where did that come from? Is that in your Bible? Because it's not in mine. The Bible says that those who are in positions of leadership in the body of Christ are servants. And Jesus said, if you want to be great in the kingdom of God, be the servant of all (Matthew 20:26).

You're not above anybody. In fact, we used to tell people when they became an elder here at Calvary Chapel, we called it a holy demotion. It's like, congratulations, you just got demoted to the role of elder. Now you go clean the toilet, would you? Because it needs it, sort of thing. And that's in keeping with what we see or what Jesus spoke about when He talked about true leadership.

The disciples, they were always trying to talk about who was the greatest. Sometimes Jesus would even approach him or confront him and say, what were you guys talking about? And they were like, 'well . . . I think . . . just talking about . . .' and they were embarrassed. And so Jesus would begin to speak to them about greatness in the kingdom of God.

Well, in the kingdom of man, greatness always elevates. In some churches the preacher, minister, whoever, whatever they referred to him, would climb huge stairs up to, into a pulpit where he'd look down upon the people. And this is what manmade religious ideas always do: they always elevate man.

So what we see here, even the clothing that is seen on this woman, is this elevation of royalty in this picture of manmade religion and excessive wealth. Excessive wealth.

By the way, this description of a wealthy-and-yet apostate religious system has tempted many people to claim that, their conclusion, is that this is a picture of the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope being the antichrist. This is a very popular picture. I personally don't see it. I agree with many other brothers in the Lord who see this as a much, much, much, much bigger system of religious organization than one particular group or one particular individual. This is manmade religion. And I'm not saying that Roman Catholicism couldn't be a part of it, but so could Methodism and so could Lutheranism and so could any other thing that begins to deviate from a biblical pattern or a biblical model doesn't matter.

Listen, Calvary Chapel is just as liable to stray as any other group. We have to constantly be diligent. We have to be vigilant. We have to stay on course, you guys. We have to stick to the word. And I challenge you, the people of Calvary Chapel Ontario, that if you ever hear me say something that is unbiblical and simply cannot be corroborated by the word of God, you need to go find another fellowship because this could happen. We've seen it happen. I had a note from a lovely lady who listens to us from Southern California. She was just broken hearted that her church of 9 years, suddenly became woke. And it's a well known solid denomination that we have right here in our community and other communities nearby.

And suddenly the church decided they are just open to people living in an openly gay homosexual lifestyle. And it's going to be okay. And they'll let him into leadership and the whole 9 yards. And this woman was just absolutely broken hearted. She's been attending for years and years, had been fed, encouraged. Loves the people, loves the leadership. But just one Sunday, she's like, oh, who's that up on the worship team? And so she went up to introduce herself to this person up on the worship team, 'I'd never seen you here before. I just wanted to introduce myself.' And the lady says, 'oh, hi, I'm so and so and this is my wife.'

And so the gal that listens to us, she went and talked to the pastor and the pastor's like, yeah I'll look into it, I'll deal with it. And yet, no, it just went right on. Can happen anywhere, guys. Can happen anywhere, when we deviate from the word of God.

Now I want you to notice as we go on here, the primary targets of this organized, rebellious, apostate religious system that John is seeing. Verse 6, it says, "*6And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.*" Notice that John says that the woman here is depicted as literally drunk with the blood of the

tribulation saints. We know that the tribulation saints are going to be martyred during the tribulation period.

And these are people who, I hate to put it this way, but they missed the rapture. Jesus came for His church, but they had not yet bowed the knee. But once all the people were gone and whatever, they came to their senses, and they came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And they probably, I'm assuming that they're going to get into the Word.

And they're going to find out how difficult it's going to be and they're going to realize that they're going to pay with their lives. They will be martyred. And we think about this martyrdom, and we can understand it coming from the hands of the antichrist who will brook no rival, against his own crazy religious thoughts.

But manmade religion is going to be a large source of how these people are going to be martyred. They're going to be martyred by religious people. They're going to be murdered by religious people. Apostate, mind you, but religious. And so he sees her as drunk, literally inebriated with the blood of the saints, and it says, you'll notice that he "*marveled*" at it.

And so the angel said to him in verse 7, "*Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.*" Again, and she's being carried by the antichrist. All right? He goes on to say, "*⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.*"

We talked about this before. There was in an earlier chapter of Revelation we saw that John beheld this beast that suffered a mortal wound but then was returned to life. And this sounds like what's going on. That somehow the antichrist is going to suffer some sort of a mortal situation where he will either appear to be dead or actually be dead and then be resurrected in some sort of a counterfeit resurrection of some sort.

And the people of the world whose names are not written in the book of life. They're going to marvel at this and they're going to just be blown away by what they see happening. And you'll notice that it goes on. John says in verse 9, "*⁹This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen,*" now I need you to pay attention here for just a bit because verses 9 and 10 are very challenging because you'll notice that it's almost given to us in

almost like riddle form. So what are we reading here? He says, this calls for a mind of wisdom.

Some of you guys are like, well, it counts me out. That's okay. I feel the same way. Believe me when I look at some of these things. He says, "*the seven heads*" and this is talking about the picture that was seen in the beast, "*are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;*" And by the way, this is one of the reasons that people think that this is dealing with Rome, because Rome is built on seven hills.

But that's the difference. Rome is built on seven hills, not mountains. And this is the Greek word for mountains. If you have an NIV, your Bible says hills and it's really not an accurate translation. It is mountains. So anyway, he says "*the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;*"

But he says those seven heads and mountains represent seven kings. That refers to world powers. And notice he says something here about those seven. What does he say at the end of that verse? He says, "*five of whom have fallen,*" so let's look at the tenses that are given here.

We need to actually read the rest of the verse. He says, "*one is, the other has not yet come,*" "¹¹*As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.*" So that's easy to understand, isn't it? You guys with me? Okay, let's try to make some sense of this.

Let's pay attention to these tenses. There are seven kings, five of whom have fallen - that's past tenses. One is - that's present tense. The other has not yet come - that's future tense. But when he does come, he only remains for a little while. That's a way of saying his time is short. His rule or his ability to rule is short.

So what is it about all these tenses? So we're talking about seven, essentially seven kingdoms, five of them, he says are done, they're over. Now remember, he's speaking these tenses to John in his day. This is not for you and me to think about in our present tense. This is for John to think about in his present tense.

So five of these kings, he says, have fallen. In other words, they came, they ruled, they're gone. Five of them have fallen. By the time John was hearing this, they had already fallen. All right, so when we go through the Bible and we look for these dominant world powers that are mentioned in the Bible, it's pretty easy to see what these five world powers are in the Bible.

And I'm going to put 'em up on the screen as a matter of fact for you so you can see them. And they are:

(slide)

Five world powers that once were but are no more

- Egypt
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Medo-Persia
- Greece

Egypt. Assyria. Assyria is the nation that conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. And then they got conquered by Babylon, which conquered the southern kingdom of Judah. And then Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persians. And then Greece, Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persian empire.

And in John's day, those were the five major world powers that are given in the word of God that had risen and had in fact fallen. But then John is told, one is - that's the present tense. Well, what was the world power in John's present tense? It was Rome. Rome was the dominating world power at the time when John was given these words.

So then John is told the other, so we've got, five are gone, six is currently in power, and then he says the other has not yet come. Now we've jumped ahead to the tribulation period. We've jumped ahead to the time of the antichrist who will rise in power, and he will be the seventh. But notice this weird, almost kind of riddle kind of language.

In verse 11. It says, *"As for the beast that was and is not,"* (in other words, the beast who lived and then died) *"it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction."* Now, he's going to explain this in just a moment, but he's basically saying the beast is the seventh power, but he dies. Then he comes back to life and he's going to become also the eighth power.

So the antichrist, he's actually going to rule, if you will, two times in a dominating way during the tribulation period. But we're going to have it explained to us as we read on in these verses where his power is going to come from.

All right, look at verse 12. *"¹²And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power,"* and they're not going to receive royal power until the tribulation period.

But look what it says: *"they are to receive authority as kings for one hour,"* and that's another way of saying just for a very short period of time. But look what it says: *"together with the beast."* And now listen to this in verse 13. *"¹³These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast."*

So what's going to happen? The beast is going to rise up and be the seventh dominating power, but he's going to suffer some kind of immortal wound. He's going to die, but then he's going to be raised to life. Apparently in this very short period while he's dead, there's these ten kingdoms that kind of take control. Because when it comes to power, wherever there's a vacuum, it gets filled immediately.

And so these ten kingdoms rush in and they take power. Well then the antichrist comes back to life. And so they invite him to join them. And they're so enamored with him they actually give their power to him then. They hand over their power to him. So this Ten Nation Federation says, and this is something by the way, we're going to read at the end here. The Lord actually moves upon them to do this, and this is all part of God's plan.

And so these nations give over their power then to the antichrist. So he is the seventh and the eighth. During this time. Then the angel explains what the antichrist kind of convinces them to do. It says in verse 14, and this is just a real short synopsis. It says, *"¹⁴They will make war on the Lamb and the Lamb will" (The Lamb, by the way, is Jesus. So they're going to make war on the Lamb). "and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."* I love how the angel just kind of, he gives this one verse synopsis.

He goes, oh, and then they're going to wage war against Jesus, but He's going to blow them out of the water and He is going to do it with the saints and it's all going to be cool. It's just kind of a quick sort of a thing. The Lamb will conquer them. So what he's basically done, he skipped ahead to the very end, to the battle of Armageddon.

That's what he did here. So we're not really being careful to try to keep things in just absolute rigid chronological order. We're skipping things. Now we see again that descriptive verse that we read earlier about the waters that the woman sits on. You'll remember that refers to all the people, basically of the world

showing her dominion. Verse 16, *"¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute."* All right, now this is important that you see this. We've just come to a very critical time in the great tribulation. Remember at the very beginning of the chapter, this woman is riding the beast, and that signifies her control, or at least the appearance of control.

So religious Babylon, or the rebellious, defiant, apostate religion of man, is riding or seemingly controlling the power of the antichrist. But I don't think they are really at all because now we come to the midpoint of the great tribulation and what happens? It says that these ten horns, these ten powers, these ten kingdoms, along with the antichrist are going to turn on manmade religion.

And they're going to say, all right, you're done. Your time is over. And again, the reason for this is because this is the point in the tribulation period where the antichrist rises up. Daniel tells us that this is the point where he actually puts his own image, establishes his image in the temple. The rebuilt Jewish temple and demands to be worshiped as God (Daniel 8).

So if the antichrist is going to demand to be worshiped as God, he's obviously not going to put up with any other religious system that's going to vie for any attention away from him. Because of course, this is what satan has always wanted from the very beginning: to be worshiped as God. And so he's going to put down, or it says here that they *"will hate the prostitute."*

It says *"They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire."* They're going to just eliminate manmade religion. Look at verse 17, *"¹⁷for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose"* I love that *"by being of one mind"* they're going to be totally united *"and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled."*

So God is going to do this work in their lives to, together in a unified agreement, hand over their power to the antichrist. Together put down manmade religion, obliterate it, and make way for the beast, the antichrist, now to be worshiped as God. So what we're seeing is this huge shift that's going on here. The first half of the great tribulation is going to be dominated by manmade religion. I think the Jews are going to feel pretty popular and pretty good about it until the midpoint of the great tribulation. That's when things really get ugly. That's when the antichrist turns on apostate world religion and destroys her.

Remember, that's a figurative her. Verse 18, *"¹⁸And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth."* Notice he calls

again that great city, and we know what that great city is. It's mystery Babylon. That's what we started off seeing at the beginning of the chapter.

John saw this and it was depicted for us. And mystery Babylon, which is this religious system of man, which previously held dominion over the kings and powers of the earth, now at the midpoint comes to an end and is destroyed. Now, I know that we're getting close to eight o'clock, but I want to do chapter 18, and I'll tell you why I think we can do it.

Chapter 18, it really goes with chapter 17 because now we're going to deal with commercial Babylon. Or material wealth Babylon, if you will. The reason I think we can get through this quickly is this chapter doesn't really need a whole lot of comment. There are no riddles that we have to kind of untangle in this chapter.

And I'll tell you something. You guys remember reading through books like Isaiah and Ezekiel and other books where prophetically, they're denouncing cities or nations and talking about God's judgment. Well, that's what this chapter sounds like. It sounds just like that, and you're going to see that as we read through this. So we're going to essentially just kind of read through this.

It's a pronouncement of doom over cities and nations or this system, if you will, that took part in commercial Babylon. Now remember, Babylon is the figurative picture of man's rebellion and defiance. And it is seen religiously and it is seen in terms of material wealth as well.

In other words, man thumbs his nose at God. Says, I'm going to be my own God and I am going to be wealthy by myself. Like that song, I did it my way. You know that's the anthem of sinful modern man. So here we go. We're going to read through this.

"¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ²And he called out with the mighty voice,

*"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
She has become a dwelling place for demons,
a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast."*

And those are all figurative pictures of the sin of man.

*"³For all nations have drunk
the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,
and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her
luxurious living."*

This is why we believe this is talking about commercial Babylon, or material Babylon. Because it's talking about the fact that she made the people of the world, the kings of the earth, the rich of the world, even richer, and they lived in luxury.

"⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

*"Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;
⁵for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities."*

This is an interesting statement, isn't it, where God is speaking to those people that remain and he says, come out of her. Come out of this system of man's defiance that is based on wealth and material gain. Now, it's unthinkable that any believer who's living on the earth would be part of religious Babylon because religious Babylon is apostate and it's a devised system of man's own making. But commercial Babylon that's different.

This is about money. This is about wealth. This is about materialism. And when you think about it, the draw of materialism is a very challenging thing to battle against. Even as believers, we struggle. How many movies do we watch in a given year where somebody is either wealthy or gets wealthy?

It's a common theme. It's pounded into our hearts and minds over and over and over again. We admire the wealthy. We gather around the wealthy. If you just have money in our culture today, that's enough to be popular. You don't have to have any talent, any ability. Paris Hilton proved that one here in the last decade, zero, but she's got money.

She's got wealth, prosperity. We're going to follow her. We want to know all about her. We want to know about her life. It's very challenging. So God calls His people, be careful, withdraw, come out because this is going to be judged, this is going to be judged. Verse 6 has:

*"6Pay her back as she herself has paid back others,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.
As she glorified herself and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,
since in her heart she says,
'I sit as a queen,
I am no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.'
For this reason her plagues will come in a single day,
death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire;
for mighty as the Lord God who has judged her.""*

By the way, this is one of the reasons why we believe that commercial material Babylon (in other words, the system of man's determination to thumb his nose at God through wealth) is going to happen at the end of the great tribulation. Whereas religious Babylon is literally put down by the antichrist in midpoint of the tribulation. But this one is waits till the end. It says *"the Lord God has judged her."* Verse 9:

"9And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰They will stand far off, in fear of her torment and say,

*"Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come."*

¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹²cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls."

So yes, human trafficking is also a part of commercial Babylon. Verse 14:

*"¹⁴The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendors*

*are lost to you,
never to be found again!"*

*¹⁵The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off,
in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,*

*¹⁶Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with fine pearls!
For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."*

*And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the
sea, stood far off¹⁸ and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,*

"What city was like the great city?"

¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

*"Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.*

Notice though how this judgment is seen by believers. This is interesting.

Verse 20, "²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven," (I love this. This is great.) *"and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"* Isn't that interesting. It's a completely different thing. The people of the world, the merchants of the world are mourning. They're, 'oh it's over,' and they're just crying on, and the saints are going 'yippy!' And then verse 21:

*²¹Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into
the sea, saying,*

*"So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more;
²²and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more,
and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more,*

*and the sound of the mill
will be heard in you no more,
23 and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more,
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more,"*

"for your merchants" (look at that) "were the great ones of the earth," isn't that something? In other words, the powerful people of the earth were the wealthy. And this last statement of verse 23 is also very interesting: "and all nations were deceived by your sorcery."

Now that is a very interesting word to be used there. The Greek word for sorcery is *pharmakeia*, and it literally means to prepare drugs, and it carries the idea of an addictive and alluring nature, which drugs can be. And so it's basically speaking of the fact that money and wealth has allured, it's been like a drug.

The opiate of the people, their wealth, their desire for material gain, and the longing to be wealthy and to be powerful because it goes along with wealth. It became this opiate this drug that they took and were addicted to. And so it talks about how they were deceived by the sorcery.

*"24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth.*

I want to remind you again that some people believe that this is referring to a literal fall of a literal city. They believe that Babylon will be rebuilt sometime during the great tribulation. Again, it'll be the center of the antichrist activity of wealth and power and so forth.

And then it will be destroyed. And that's possible. And if that's your personal belief, we're not going to part ways over it. I personally believe it's more figurative, but it honestly doesn't really matter. What really matters is what this is all about. And what it's all about, these chapters, is the allure of devising my own religious system so that I'm in charge and people are going to look up to me. And the allure of wealth and power. I want to remind you of something Jesus said in Matthew chapter 16. Let me put it up on the screen:

(slide)

Matthew 16:26 (ESV)

*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?
Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?*

Isn't that a great passage? What good is it? So you gain a lot of wealth, but what if you lose your soul in the process? What if you lose your footing in the process? I love that prayer that we find in Proverbs chapter 30 up on the screen:

(slide)

Proverbs 30:8-9 (ESV)

Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Isn't that a beautiful prayer? It's basically just saying, Lord, don't give me too much. Don't give me too little. Just take care of me. You promise to do that. Don't give me too much, or I might get full of myself and start thinking, I don't need God, I got money. But if I don't have enough, I might be tempted to actually ruin my witness by taking from others through theft and in so doing disgrace the name of my God. It's a good prayer, isn't it?

Well, we did it. We got through two chapters, so we're going to stop there obviously, and we're going to close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the opportunity tonight to spend some time in your word. Lord, these are challenging chapters, not just to understand some of the ins and outs of them, but also as a warning against these enticing things of the world. And so, Father God, we pray in the name of Jesus that you'd keep our eyes on you. Fixed on you. Trained on the word. Always looking to you through your word to speak to us. And Lord, help us to stay and abide in the word as we saw a couple of weeks ago in our study of John. Lord, help us to continue on to stay, to be grounded in your word and not to move off the dime. And if we ever begin to, Lord, we give you permission to bring us back where we need to be. We look to you to do these things, and we trust in you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, and all God's people said: Amen.