

The Breaking of Babylon, part 1

Revelation 18

(preached Pine Grove 7/30/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

If there is one thing that politics has taught us over the past 20 years, it is this...

The majority in the country value economic prosperity over morality..

That may have never been more clear in the aftermath of the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal of the mid 90s..

Where a sitting president continued to have high approval ratings even though he was involved in an adulterous relationship while in the White House...

Most experts believe that Clinton survived that scandal simply because the economy was booming at the time..

With the stock market surging and people working, they were willing to overlook the personal morality of the president as long as his economic policies kept money in their pockets..

And that shift in people's thinking that began to occur in those days in our country has only grown and larger...

To the point that even morally conservative people help elect a president who is clearly immoral in the past election...

Which is further proof that morality is no longer important in our nation's political system...

Now, we are just catching up the world in that sinful way of thinking...

Europe has long since left morality out of the equation in politics...

And some of the world has never valued morality in their government...

Now, this may be a relative new way of thinking in our world, but it is not going away...

In fact, the morality of a politician is not something that candidates even campaign about any more..

We simply live in a culture that values economics over morals...

Long story short...

People will put up with any type of morality as long as their pocketbooks, wallets, and bank accounts aren't affected...

Now, that should come as no surprise when we consider the end times...

Because in those final 7 years, the Antichrist rises to power on the heels of a thriving global economy...

As he establishes peace in the world, businesses begin to flourish...

And that only add to the world's admiration of this man of evil...

Long story short...

In the end times, we don't care if you act like the devil in human flesh as long as the economy is strong...

And it will be because it will be centralized and consolidated in one man as he leads a revived Roman empire that dominated the world..

To bring you up to speed on where we are in the book of Revelation, we have made it up to Revelation 18....

We are at the very end of the world as we know it...

We have seen the details of the final 7 years of the earth know as the tribulation period...

In sum, the final years of the earth will play out like this...

The church will be raptured from the earth as the Lord Jesus comes in the air to snatch his people from the earth before trouble begins to break out....

This event will lead to some chaos as the world tries to figure out what happened to these missing people..

I also think this event will have a devastating effect on the US, if we have not already destroyed ourselves before the rapture in another fashion...

Such a fall of the world's superpower will create a new for another nation or group of nations to lead the world...

So, 10 world leaders going together to try and establish some sense of world order....

Then someone connected to these 10 kings rises up among them and becomes an 11th leader who sets himself apart through his charm and arrogance...

Though he won't be called the Antichrist, this man will be the one who sits down with Israel and makes peace

with them which kicks off the final years world history...

Now, we need to remind ourselves that the first part of the 7 years is not going to be hell on earth...

In fact, the Antichrist will begin his rise to power and establish his rule in times of peace...

Economies will recover from the rapture...

Nations and regions that were enemies will begin to lay down their swords...

Religions will coexist in peace...

It will be the best of times the world has ever known and the world will grow to love and adore the Antichrist as he leads the world to this never before seen economic and religious prosperity...

Now remember, the world is not going to call this man the Antichrist...

They clearly won't associate him with evil, but even if they did, they wouldn't care because the world will be thriving economically...

And it will thrive for 3 1/2 years...

Now, for the past two weeks, we have watched how this time of peace will cause false religions to grow and eventually merge into one large global false religion represented by a harlot we met in chapter 17...

And we talked about how this false religion will be used by the Antichrist in those 3 1/2 years to grow his fame..

But as false religion begins to prosper, so will the economies of the world...

People will be working...

Stock markets will be thriving...

Businesses will be booming...

Now something we haven't talked about much will be the center of the Antichrist's operations, there is good reason to believe that it will be located in the Middle East...

First, we know that the Antichrist will head up a revised Roman Empire, and the old Roman Empire was a collection of European and Middle Eastern lands...

So it makes sense that a revived Roman Empire will be entered near the former one, with one notable exception...

It seems that the Bible locates the capital of the second Roman Empire in Babylon and not Rome...

Now, I showed you a map of where Babylon is located a few weeks ago...

It truly is the center of three major continents of Europe, Asia and Africa...

Now someone asked me a few weeks ago why would the center of world government be in that part of the world given that the US has been the major power of the world for some time now?

Couple answers to that question...

#1 - We have no guarantee that the US will continue as a world power...

We are a newcomer to the world scene in terms of world history and there is no reason to believe that we will be around much longer...

And though that may sound pessimistic, most countries never make it past 200 years...

And then add in the fact that the US is not even mentioned specifically in the end times, and it seems clear that the center of the world will shift back to where it started....

And that is right here in the garden of Eden in modern day Iraq...

#2 - The second reason that Babylon makes sense for a location of the Antichrist's headquarters is that it is located at the crossroads of the eastern world...

Europe, Asia, Africa all converge near Babylon as you can see from this map of that area of the world...

Now, it is clear that false religion will be worldwide but it seems that the economic and political center of the world will be at Babylon...

The reason for this is simple...

Kingdoms need a political center and economies need a distribution center and Babylon would be perfect for both...

Now for years, people would come to the book of Revelation and try to make Babylon into some other city...

And the reason for that is that Babylon had not been a major city since its fall in 539 BC...

So many Bible scholars tried to make Babylon symbolic in the book of Revelation....

Some have claimed that Babylon is New York City or London or Paris or even Hollywood simply because they couldn't imagine Babylon being a city again...

But then Saddam Hussein came to power in Iraq, and guess what?

He called himself a modern day Nebuchadnezzar and he began to rebuild Babylon...

I have shown you some of these pics of what Babylon looks like today...

You can see the rebuilt Ishtar gate...

Here is a place that Saddam built for himself there...

Here is an overview of the presidential compound built there...

And then not far from this is another interesting thing related to Babylon...

Saddam actually began to rebuild on a ziggurat that is thought to be the site of the tower of Babel...

And get this...

He ordered that every brick used to build this monument have his name engraved on them....

Remind you of anything?

Remember that the people at the tower of Babel wanted to make name for themselves...

Now obviously Saddam was removed and then executed, but his work in Babylon has reminded many that Babylon in Revelation may mean a revival of the ancient city in the end times...

Now, a couple notes here...

Though Babylon was the name of a worldwide false religion and even a name for a worldwide evil system, I think it is also the name of a real city where Antichrist will set up his headquarters...

And that will be important because a worldwide government needs a central location and so does a worldwide economic program...

And out there in the middle of Iraq is where I believe the global economy of the world will be located...

Now, that brings us to chapter 18 of the book of Revelation...

Which focuses on the fall of Babylon...

And the idea is not just the fall of the city, but the fall of world economy and government that will be located there...

You see, the world religions will join into one as the Antichrist rises from the dead halfway through the 7 years and demands all the religions of the world worship him...

And as that merger begins to take place, the political and economic power will be centered in him as well...

But all of that system comes crashing down during the second half of the tribulation as God begins sending his judgments from heaven down to earth...

And what we get in chapter 18 is a picture of the judgment that will fall on this one world economy...

So, I have divided the chapter into descriptions of this coming judgment ...

We will begin in verses 1-3 with.....

I. A Judgment Deserved (1-8)

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “[a]Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a [b]prison of every unclean spirit, and a [c]prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations [d]have drunk of the wine of the [e]passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the [f]wealth of her [g]sensuality.”

John has been our tour guide through the book of Revelation, and he has simply written down for us what God wanted him to record..

By the time, we get to chapter 18, John has witnessed a number of things, but now his ears are filled with the shouts of an angel who is celebrating the fall of Babylon....

Clearly, John is hearing about a future event in world history that is even future to our day and it is the fall of a future city and evil system known as Babylon...

Her fall will make her only suitable as prison for demons and unclean spirits...

And then you see that Babylon was no ordinary city...

It had become a central hub of activity for all the nations of the world who had come to her since she was the center of economic activity...

And the fact that she was a crossroads of the world also made her a cesspool of sin and sensuality...

If you consider the most sin-filled cities of the ancient world, they are usually seaport towns or either were located on major trade routes...

And though the nations used those cities for commerce, they also became a place where the worst sins of the world found a home...

Corinth was once such city, and there were many others in ancient history as well....

Future Babylon will be that kind of place as the nations will come to her in order to buy and sell, and as they come, the sins of the world will collect there....

And where there is an abundance, there is a need of an abundance of judgment...

Now in verse 4, John hears another voice in heaven calling to some of the people in Babylon...

And this time, the voice appears to belong to God as he calls his people out of the city...

4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have [h]piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Now the question is why would God's people be in Babylon?

Well, it will be the center of world government and economics so people, even God's people, will not be able to avoid going there...

But here God's call them out in two ways...

First, he calls his people out of there to avoid them being contaminated by the sin there...

But he also calls them out because of the impending judgment to fall upon the city...

And the reason for that judgment is seen in verse 5...

Babylon's sins had piled up as high as heaven...

I love the irony of this statement...

Remember, Babylon was the sight where people wanted to pile up their good works to heaven and reach God...

And at the end of time there is a tower in Babylon that reaches to heaven...

Unfortunately, the tower is a tower of sin...

And where there is a tower of sin, there is a tower of judgment coming....

Look at verse 6....

6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and [i]give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived [j]sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.' 8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, [k]pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

In verses 6-8, we get a description of the judgment coming to Babylon and its people, and it is not a pretty picture..

God demands that the people pay for their sins..

This is the principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth...

A man sins, a man dies...

And you also see the arrogance of unbelief here in the last half of verse 7...

The city even up to the point of judgment thinks she is just fine...

I am a queen.

I will never see mourning...

So many people live with that arrogance...

It's my life.

I will do what I want to do..

No one tells me what to do...

I have been sinning for a long time, and look nothing has happened to me yet...

And that arrogance grows to a point where it leads to invincibility...

The city of Babylon even says, “I will never see mourning.”

This is the deceitfulness of sin...

It lures and keeps and even convinces you that nothing bad will ever happen to you...

The more you sin and get away with it, the more confident you grow....

But just like the people in Noah’s day, the flood of judgment comes unexpectedly...

How many people do you know in the prime of their life who were cut down while committing their sins?

To live in sin and flaunt it before God is the most dangerous practice any man, woman, boy or girl could participate in..

And you know why?

Look at the end of verse 8...

The Lord God who judges you is strong...

I will never forget really cold night in Whitmire when all my friends and I were out playing basketball...

And one of my friends lost a little Nike swoosh that was attached to a necklace he was wearing...

Well, it was cold and dark and I wasn't in the mood for stopping our game and looking for a piece of a necklace that was probably worth about \$5...

So I began to taunt and tease this guy over losing such an insignificant piece of jewelry...

He was already agitated at losing it, and I wasn't helping with my taunts...

But people around me were laughing at my jokes so I kept it up...

Finally, as a punch line to get everyone to laugh, I offered to give him \$2 and drive him to the flea market to get another one tomorrow...

Everyone laughed, but the next thing I felt was his fist clocking me right in the nose...

And it was cold, and the next thing I know, I am on my bottom asking him to not swing again..

I learned a lot of valuable lessons that night, but the most important one was this....

If you are going to tease a bigger guy, never turn your back on him and be expecting a punch at any minute...

Look, many people read this and think what a horrible God...

Isn't he merciful and forgiving and filled with love?

How can he strike these innocent people of Babylon?

And the answer to that is two fold...

First, no one in the world is innocent...

From the best person you have ever met to the worst criminal in the worst prison, we are all guilty before God..

There is no one innocent before God...

Second, when God delivers judgment, it usually comes after much warning...

Think about the people of Babylon at this point...

God has sent 144,000 preachers to preach the gospel to the world in these 7 years...

There have also the the testimonies of people getting saved and certainly they were preaching the gospel to the people of the world...

There are still Bibles around that provide the way to salvation...

And in case anyone has been left without warning, God has sent angels flying through the air preaching the gospel...

God is not an unloving God with a hammer in heaven ready to swing it...

God is a loving God who repeatedly warns people of coming judgment...

You are being warned today...

Some of you have been warned for years...

The only people who see God as unloving and kind in his judgment are those to whom judgment is coming...

If God is anything, he is patient and kind and longsuffering, but DO NOT mistake his patience for his absence..

God is going to judge unbelieving sinners, and though he has delayed, He keeps his word.

Judgment is coming to any unbeliever, just as judgment is coming to a future city and system of evil known as Babylon...

And it will clearly be a judgment that is deserved...

But it is also a judgment that will be lamented...

II. A Judgment Lamented (9-19)

Let's read verses 9-19...

9 “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived [l]sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more — 12 cargoes of gold and silver and precious [m]stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and [n]bronze and iron and marble, 13 and cinnamon and [o]spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and [p]slaves and [q]human lives. 14 The fruit [r]you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. 15 The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, 16 saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and [s]adorned with gold and

precious [t]stones and pearls; 17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every [u]passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ 19 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 [v]wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’

Let me simply introduce this section by looking at the first few verses and we will talk about it more next week...

But look at the reaction of the people of the world when the city of Babylon is overthrown...

The first reaction is from the kings of the earth who have been doing business with Babylon...

These leaders have grown even richer because of the global economy that is centered in Babylon...

They have been able to live sensuously and more sinfully because of the riches and power that came from a one world government and economy....

Yet, now as that system begins to burn and be destroyed, they take a step back from Babylon not to be burned up themselves and they begin to mourn...

Then you see the lamenting and mourning of the merchants of the earth in verse 11 followed by the lamenting and mourning of the shipping industry in verses 17-19...

And the reason for their mourning clear...

Their source of income and wealth in the powerful global economic system of Babylon is going up in smoke right before their eyes...

And they are mourning...

Now understand this how backwards this is....

These kings, merchants and sailors who never had soft enough hearts to mourn over their sin, will mourn over the loss of a city that fed their sin...

These men who had never shed a tear over their sins against God pour buckets of tears when their precious city goes up in smoke...

It reminds me of a drunkard who never shows any remorse for his drunkenness but will cry like a baby if you pour his liquor out...

What hardness of heart!!

To refuse to cry over sin but to weep and mourn when the source of your sin is removed...

Yet, this is the way of the unbeliever...

Never sadness over sin but extreme sadness when he can't sin...

That is enough for this week...

We will wrap up our look at the judgment of Babylon next week...

Conclusion

Let me just offer a few closing thoughts for all of our hearts...

#1 - The church is different.

We live in a Babylon-like culture...

False religion is all around us...

A centralized and powerful global government system is what people are desiring...

A strong economy allows governments to do as they please..

Yet, this is the world in which we are living...

Though we don't see Babylon today, we see shadows of it growing around us...

How are we to live in it?

First of all, just like the believers in the final days of the earth, we can't avoid being in contact with Babylon...

But I can avoid being drawn into the sin of Babylon...

Jesus prayed that his disciples would be in the world but not of the world, and that is the balance we must find in our lives as believers...

I must interact with the world...

Which is good because that interaction allows me to share the gospel with unbelievers...

And it also allows me to live a like unlike the world which acts as a magnet to the world...

That is why it is so important for churches to not be like the world in their worship...

We don't use secular music to draw in the world...

WE don't need bright lights and the latest fashion to attract the world...

I don't want an unbeliever coming in here and seeing an exact copy of the world...

The church is not the world...

We exist in it but we are set apart from it in all we do...

When an unbeliever walks in a church, he should remark about how different it is from the world...

If he doesn't see that, the church is in the world AND of the world, and that doesn't honor the words of the Lord of the church...

And the same is true of a believer...

If people see you as different because of how you live, praise the Lord for it and tell them the reason you are different...

If people don't see you as different from the world, I would examine myself to see if I am truly saved...

#2 - *The gospel is glorious.*

One final thought for today..

You have seen that the city of Babylon and the people of Babylon deserved judgment...

They had remained in their sins...

And because of that, they got what they deserved..

Nearly everyone understands that principle of life....

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth...

Most of us celebrate and want that kind of fairness in the world..

Unfortunately, that kind of fairness will send all of us to hell..

If you want an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth justice, you will get it in the worst way possible..

Because we all have sinned and we all deserve punishment...

That is where the gospel becomes glorious...

The gospel says Jesus paid the penalty for my sin, and when I trust in Him, I avoid getting what I deserve...

There is no true courtroom in the world where a guilty man can avoid getting what he deserves...

But the glory of the gospel is that the greatest Judge of the Universe has made a way for guilty criminals to avoid eternal prison...

And that way is by repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ who paid the penalty for your sins....

Are you guilty in God's courtroom today?

Are you on broad road that ends with you getting what you deserve?

Take an exit ramp to the narrow road that begins with you turning from your life of sin and putting all your trust and faith in Christ....

If you need more directions off the broad way, I will be glad to speak with you today....

Let us pray...

III. A Judgment Celebrated (20)

IV. A Judgment Delivered (21-24)