

Revelation 20-06-11a

Good evening, welcome to the Thursday night Bible class at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We continue tonight our end times study, looking in the book of Revelation. We are in the vicinity of chapter 18.

We'll also be in the book of Isaiah tonight, looking at some of the precursors and context providing scripture for this scene, which is of great interest to us now as we find ourselves in peculiar times. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are to be founded upon the rock of the Lord Jesus Christ to have stability, peace and confidence, what air be tied because we know that you take care of us.

You know what we need before we ask. You are accomplishing your plan and purpose in history and in our individual lives. We pray tonight as we look at these portions of your word together that the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts in a meaningful and pertinent way so that we can make application and we can be prepared to engage in those good works that you have for ordained that we should walk in them.

We pray that each of us can grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior and be thoroughly equipped for every good work, be prepared for service both now and in the ages to come. As a result of the things we look at tonight and our fellowship together, we ask these things in Jesus name, amen. If you remember Revelation chapter 18, we see the angel coming down from heaven with great authority.

The earth is illuminated with his glory. He cries with a loud voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. You see in this a threefold description, the dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird. And these descend from the heights of the heavenly realms through the air where there is the darkness dwelling place of birds.

When I translated this in the past, you find the demons in the first part, the dwelling place of demons, the prison or the hold, the keep for every foul spirit. This is actually the word for bird and a cage for every unclean and hated beast, a Theron. You have Ornos as in ornithology in the middle there and you have Theron at the end.

So it moves from the heavenly or spiritual realms into the middle realms of visible superiority, visible height down to the ground where you have the unclean and hated birds. And then in verse three, you have three similar things. The nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her

fornication.

This is the conceptual or spiritual porna that has been perpetrated by the nations. The kings, those who should be in visible rulership, i.e. in the vicinity of that middle ground where the birds are middle air, where the birds should be found, have committed porna with her. And then the merchants, which is in the earth area where the unclean and hated beasts are, have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.

This is the self-gratification, material comforts and so on. So there's this threefold descent when Babylon is fallen from where there should be spiritual victory over the demons. There should be a proper respect for authority and not only fearing God, but honoring the king, but the kings are dishonorable.

And then in the commerce and behaviors of daily life, there is failure. So these three areas that you see in verses two and three are in the highest realm, the spiritual, then in the middle ground or the middle air, if you will, the political, and then finally at the base level, the economic. And remembering the principle that we've seen over the last couple of weeks, that this is the material expression or the material symbolizing of spiritual truths.

And obviously the Babylon symbolizes something and these kings of the earth represent something and these foul spirits or foul birds and unclean and hated beasts represent something. And so we get a clue as to what they represent by looking at the realm in which they operate. So there is corruption and pollution in the spiritual realm, in the political realm and in the economic realm.

You see also in verse two, that Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, is repeated. And this is a bit of a clue, almost a footnote as to its source. And then you see this description of the problems within Babylon.

Babylon, of course, is most notable in scripture as being the captors for Judah in the Babylonian captivity and the head of gold in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, leading to these kingdoms that are represented. First of all, Babylon as the head of gold and then the shoulders and arms of silver being the Medo-Persians. Then the belly and thighs of brass representing the Greeks under Alexander and then his generals after him.

Finally, the Roman empire as the legs of iron. And then there is the future as yet unrealized kingdom of the feet of iron mixed with clay or ceramic. Bitter, brittle and more easily fractured, of course, than the iron.

And so we ask ourselves, why does the prophetic picture in Daniel's day begin with Babylon and go forward? Why does it not comprehend earlier empires, the Assyrians that took out the Northern kingdom, maybe the Egyptians who were originally responsible for Israel's captivity? And the answer I've given to this in the past and that I still believe is the answer to that question is

that Egypt subjugated, dominated and eventually enslaved Israel, but did not convert them or force them to worship the gods of Egypt. They lived in the land of Goshen for many generations and they were never expected as slaves to adopt any particular religious forms in Egypt. Egyptians just thought they were beneath it and didn't bother.

The Assyrians removed the people of the Northern kingdom from their land, scattered them throughout their empire, but didn't make a formal effort to impress them into their Assyrian religion. The Assyrians were warlike, they were more the Klingons of their day, if you will, interested in battle and conquest and such and were not especially wedded to religion. The first time that you see an active use of political force to suborn and subvert the Israelites from their God and from their own worship to the worship of the empire is the Babylonian empire.

And you have that in the book of Daniel, you will remember Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah being thrown in the fiery furnace for refusing to bow to the image at the sound of all of that music. And that's a first. You don't have an example of that in Egypt, you don't have an example of it in Assyria or any of the other subjugations.

The Philistines didn't try to get the Israelites to worship Dagon or any of their other deities in the days when they had suppressed and overcome the Israelites, it's new in Babylon. And so the mystery woman found here in Revelation in chapter 17, 18 and the beginning of 19 representing the seducing away of God's people into false worship is labeled Babylon. And really the last time this happened before Daniel's day was the Tower of Babel, very same name back in Genesis.

And this was a man-made system that embraced both worship, political and economic ambitions centered in and symbolized by the tower. And God broke that up by confusing the languages and scattering the people. But in efforts of later days, there has been a measure of success in doing this.

These large empires like Babylon and some of its later successors have taken over vast portions of the civilized world and sought to impose both worship, political and economic structures specifically on the people of God. You can talk about the Chinese, you can talk about the continued Egyptian presence, you can talk about things that might've taken place in the Americas that were unknown in Europe and Asia and even Africa, but the people of God were not involved. And we know that this is a central idea because of the call in chapter 19 for the people of God to come out of Babylon and to be separated from it.

And so the focus is on the presence of God's people in these empires. And of course that begins with Babylon and continues down through the ages. Now, having said that, and that's largely review, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.

I said 19, I meant 18, four, when the voice says, come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins. My good friend Brian reminded me that this could well be what the archangel says when we at the rapture hear a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, what is it that the

archangel says? Well, he may well be saying this, come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins and receive of her plagues. And this of course reinforces our firm belief in a pre-judgment, pre-tribulation rapture.

But Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. Why is it repeated? This rings a bell and to find the string that is operating the clapper on that bell, we need to turn back. And so turn back, if you will, to Isaiah chapter 46.

Pretty easy to hit Isaiah. If you don't hit the Psalms, splitting the Old Testament, you will soon hit Isaiah with its 66 chapters. But turn to 46, we're actually going to be looking at 47, but I want to start in 46 because it is context and it is God describing himself.

You pick up in verse three of Isaiah chapter 46. Listen to me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel who have been upheld from birth, who have been carried from the womb, even to your old age, I am he. And even to gray hairs, I will carry you.

I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you. This is God talking to the people of God in the Old Testament day. Whether they are in Judah, whether they are the remnant of the house of Israel, God brought them into this world, he will carry them through this world.

And even to gray hairs, he will sustain, support, carry them. This is true universally. If we belong to God, he is paying attention.

We are under his observation and we want to qualify ourselves for his grace, for his preservation and for his blessing to be a part of that faithful remnant that exists in each generation. Look at verse five. To whom will you liken me, God says, and make me equal and compare me that we should be alike.

They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver on the scales. They hire a goldsmith and he makes it a God. They prostrate themselves.

Yes, they worship. They bear it on their shoulder. They carry it and set it in its place and it stands.

Notice God said up above, I'm the one who creates you. I carry you and sustain you into old age. But these people make gods of gold and silver.

They have to create it. They have to carry it. They have to sustain and preserve it.

It's just the reverse. It's the opposite of who and what God is. They cry out to it, yet it cannot answer and cannot save them out of their trouble.

Verse eight, remember this and show yourselves men. Recall to mind, O you transgressors, remember the former things of old. For I am God and there is no other.

I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times, things that are not yet done, saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. Calling a bird of prey from the East, the man who executes my counsel from a far country. Indeed, I have spoken it.

I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will also do it.

Notice that there is a man who is likened to a bird of prey coming from the East. And he says, when you see this, don't be alarmed. Don't lose your peace.

If you belong to God and you recognize who and what he is and your relationship to him, there is nothing to fear. This is a part of God's plan and God's purpose. In our short-sightedness, in our limited field of view, we can easily become distressed when negative circumstances seem to erupt in our lives, in our country, in our world.

Keep in mind, nothing is greater than God. He knows the end from the beginning. Anything that he allows by way of the momentary progress of negative things or evil things or human conquest, human power, human achievements is a part of his overall plan and purpose.

And it should not alarm us. We do not need to be dismayed or distressed. God says, I'm bringing this to pass.

I'm having this bird of prey come from the East. Verse 12, listen to me, you stubborn hearted who are far from righteousness. Now he's addressing a subset of Jacob and the remnant of the house of Israel.

Those who are not on board, who are stubborn hearted and far from righteousness. He says, I bring my righteousness year. Near, it shall not be far off.

My salvation shall not linger. And I will place deliverance in Zion for Israel, my glory. Some of you may subscribe to the little publication that comes periodically called Israel, my glory.

This is where it gets its name. So that's the prelude. That's the run-up to Isaiah chapter 47.

Now, you remember that we had the woman in the earlier chapters of Revelation that was delivered from the pursuit of the dragon who gave birth to the child and so on. And then we have this other woman in Revelation 17 and 18 that is the Scarlet Harlot. Well, here we have the Old Testament picture of that mystery, Babylon the Great, mother of harlots that we've been looking at in Revelation.

This is the background. Look at chapter 47 of Isaiah. Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon.

Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans. For you shall no more be called

tender and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal.

Remove your veil, take off the skirt, uncover the thigh, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered. Yes, your shame will be seen.

I will take vengeance and I will not arbitrate with a man." Now, that section, come down and sit in the dust is the fall from the heights. This is what is pictured as the woman riding the beast is dethroned, disenfranchised, is shaken off and destroyed. And you see the picture of pride and wealth and power and success on the part of this Babylon.

And you think about in the first instance, this is the pride at the Tower of Babel. The immediate context in Isaiah, this is the pride of the actual Babylonian empire that took Judah captive under Nebuchadnezzar and in the days of Daniel, Ezekiel and so on. But come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon.

Now she's not been married, that's important. She's a virgin daughter. She is instead playing the harlot and she's not been married.

She doesn't want to subject herself to marriage. Sit on the ground without a throne, without a chair. She's been cast out and down and now she's going to sit in the dust without a throne.

Notice, O daughter of the Chaldeans. Babylon is the capital city. Chaldea was the nation, but this speaks of the people, the people who are formerly under the rule of Babylon, the people proper, the Chaldeans.

But what are the Chaldeans noted for? When you talk about the Chaldeans in the ancient world, this is the source of the wise men. These people had the science and had the technology and had the, that's where people went who were going to appeal to human wisdom. They went to the Chaldeans.

So calling her a daughter of the Chaldeans, she has espoused and claimed as her power base, human wisdom, human knowledge, the science of the day. That's what's in view here. Daughter of the Chaldeans.

You shall no more be called tender and delicate. She has equipped herself with luxuries. This would be the equivalent today of hot running water, air conditioning, appliances, conveniences, things that do the work.

This was the model in the ancient day. Tender and delicate was every need provided for. She doesn't have to work.

She's living in the lap of luxury. But you will no more be called that. Take the millstones and grind meal.

This is not the giant millstones that you think of at a mill. These are the hand mill grindstones. This is what Jesus was talking about when he said two women shall be at the grindstones.

One shall be taken and the other left. Back in Exodus, in the run up to the final incursion of God that is going to liberate the Israelites. And God says the firstborn are going to die from those in the palace all the way down to the women who are grinding at the mill.

The firstborn throughout Egypt that are not under the blood will die. So those two references, Exodus and Matthew, both speak of these small millstones. So what is it saying? She's going to have to go to work.

All of the previous luxury is gone. Take the millstones, grind your own meal. In other words, remove your veil, take off the skirt, uncover the thigh, pass through or over the rivers.

And so instead of being in her stately fashionable garments, she's going to have to tie her skirts up high and wade across the river to go to the fields, to go do menial labor just to survive. It is the idea here. Your nakedness shall be uncovered.

Your shame will be seen. This is both somewhat literal and figurative in the sense that she's going to have to be ashamed to be seen wading these rivers. It's likely in the course of getting across the river, she is actually going to be exposed in the sense of the shame of nakedness just to get the work done, to get across the river and get back.

So she's going to go from the heights of ruling power to the lowest forms of slavery for women, which involves going out and gathering and grinding and just to have enough subsistence for herself. God says your nakedness will be uncovered. Your shame will be seen.

And the spiritual symbolism here is this false materialism and this emphasis on self-gratification is going to be ripped away and exposed for its insufficiency, its inadequacy. What is exposed? What was the first nakedness that was consciously felt by human beings? What was the cause of that? How did Adam and Eve know that they were naked? Their sin and sinfulness was exposed. And that's the nature of this exposure.

All of this luxurious living cannot hide the inward corruption that only God can fix. Only redemption and reconciliation and propitiation can remove this inmost cancerous presence. And so the nakedness and shame being exposed and seen, it is going to reveal that despite all of these attainments, despite the wisdom of the Chaldeans and all of these accomplishments, the root of the problem, which is individual personal sin in the heart is not eradicated and it's going to be exposed for what it is.

God says, I will take vengeance and I will not arbitrate with a man. It's been a lot of speculation. This is kind of a difficult little phrase in Hebrew, but the word arbitrate is not a bad translation.

It literally means to meet, but it means to meet for the purpose of negotiating. And the idea that you get here is that the woman is trying to represent herself and act in the capacity of a man. She has taken on manly responsibilities, manly rulership and so on.

She's sort of an Athaliah figure. And God says, I'm not going to negotiate with you like I would a man. You're out of place.

You'll see this further in the context here. So as you continue down verse four, as for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy one of Israel. And there's an aside here that confirms our understanding of these first verses.

We are different. We're not a part of this Babylon because we have a Redeemer. The Lord of hosts is his name.

He is the Holy one of Israel. You're Israel, not Babylon. You are God's people.

Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins and partake of her plagues. So now this is an aside. It's a little brief reminder because this is a very sobering picture of judgment.

And there's a reminder, you are redeemed. You belong to the Lord God, the Holy one of Israel. You're not under this judgment.

And keep in mind as we look at all of these tribulational truths and end time plagues and so on, that's not us. God has our names written in his book and we have nothing to fear from the outworking of his plan and his purging of this earth. But he is going to go after this daughter of Babylon in a big way.

Look at verse five. Sit in silence and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans. Once again, this is a reference to her reliance on human wisdom and human accomplishment.

You shall no longer be called the lady of kingdoms. The word here is literally mistress. It's been translated queen in some places.

But notice she's the mistress of kingdoms. She's not the king of kings. She's a mistress.

She who should be in a complimentary role to a king as perhaps a queen has instead usurped the throne for herself. I was angry, God says, with my people. I have profaned my inheritance.

In other words, I've allowed them to be removed and to be judged and given them into your hand. But you showed them no mercy. You didn't respect their origin or their God.

On the elderly, you laid your yoke very heavily. Now, this is literally the old one or the old man perhaps. But the idea here is not just that, oh, there's ageism or they've been particularly hard on the older members of the Israelite population.

What this really suggests is the old truth, the covenant promises, the established relationship of these people to God, that which is of longstanding and should have been recognized, known, and respected. In the modern day, when you think about Christianity, you think about our presence and our adherence to the truths of the Bible. What is the common criticism? Are you still clinging to these old myths and these outdated fables written by goatherds and shepherds in ancient times? Their antiquity becomes a criticism.

And there's a very heavy emphasis on, come into the 21st century and join us in the scientific age. We know enough now not to believe the creation story or the flood myth, or that there was a Jesus who did miracles and dying for sins, that's just crude and silly and that makes no sense. And there is this heavy disrespect for the old landmark.

So in particular, it becomes laying the yoke, making a hardship on the antiquity of their faith and of their relationship to God. Notice she says, I shall be a mistress forever. You did not take these things to heart nor remember the latter end of them.

This in taking the Israelites captive in Babylon was similar to the Praetorian guard chaining four soldiers to Paul. It's an opportunity to listen and to learn. Nebuchadnezzar himself gets this lesson from Daniel.

Remember the seven times that pass over him, the stump with the band around it. And Nebuchadnezzar comes to recognize that the God of Daniel is the true God. It doesn't make a huge difference, but he does recognize it.

And it is the presence of Daniel and his three friends. And Nebuchadnezzar has the good sense to elevate them to the highest positions in his government. And this is what staves off judgment until well after his time.

He's not judged directly, his kingdom is not judged. It's going to happen later in the days of his successor, two or three thrones down the line with Belshazzar. But look at verse eight, therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, and what I'm going to suggest here, I'll just tell you in advance, the woman that is clothed in purple and scarlet, she's got white linen and she's got scarlet and blue, red and blue and white in her garb.

This woman is easily, easily understood to represent for us the United States of America with our red, white, and blue symbolism. I'm not saying that the scarlet harlot is the United States exclusively. I have gone to some lengths to suggest that this is religion in all of its forms, false religion.

The people of God may be in it, but they are not of it. Come out of her, my people, so that you do not share in her sins and partake of her plagues. But there is the suggestion that at various times through history, whether it is the Tower of Babel, whether it is Egypt, whether it is Babylon, whether it is the Medo-Persians, whether it is Rome, whether in any age and at any time, the

embrace of wisdom at the expense of spiritual truth, of human accomplishment, achievement, and pursuit at the expense of reliance upon God, this is always going to be a part of the representation that this scarlet harlot of Revelation represents.

And you can see it in the Isaiah precursor here, chapter 47 and chapter 48. So when we read verse eight and following, think about our country right now. Think about what we represent in our age and at our time.

You who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, I am, and there is no one else beside me. This, by the way, is really critical. When she says, I am, and there is no one beside me, this is somewhat literal in the sense of the symbol.

She is the mistress of kingdoms and she's not sitting next to a king. She does not want to believe that her authority and her power came to her by association or as a result of being married to the king. Remember, she's the virgin daughter.

She's not been married. She has achieved this power in a fashion that is not related to marriage or descent. She's done it all on her own.

So she says, here I am, there's no one beside me. I shall not sit as a widow. I didn't inherit this power because the king died.

Remember, if you could imagine Ahab passing away and Jezebel being the queen of the Northern kingdom or Athaliah coming down and taking charge as the mother of the king in Judah, that this is not by relationship. She says, there's no one beside me. I don't sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children.

I'm not going to lose a husband because I've never taken one. And I'm not going to suffer the sorrow of losing children because I've never had them. And she thinks this is wise.

I'm going to avoid the sorrows and the pitfalls of marriage and children. I'm too smart for that. What has been going on in recent years, in recent decades in our country? Well, marriage has too many hazards.

There's too many commitment related responsibilities and I'll avoid that. I don't have to worry about being widowed and I won't have to worry about having children. I just won't have them.

I'll pursue my ambitions. I'll pursue my career. I'll fulfill my dreams.

I'll climb every mountain and ford every stream and follow every rainbow until I find my dream. So that's what she's saying. She says in her heart, I'm not dependent on anyone.

I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps. I shall not sit as a widow, meaning sit in the seat of power. And I shall not know the loss of children.

Nobody can use leverage on me. They can't get at me through my children. I can't be suborned or pulled away or concerned with family matters.

But God says, these two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day, the loss of children and widowhood. What you think you avoided is going to come to you in a single day. And the lack of legitimacy, the lack of relationship represented by no marriage and the lack of fulfillment and the lack of inheritance and legacy via offspring is going to hit with all of its sorrow and all of its judgmental weight in a single day.

They will come upon you in their fullness. Why? Because of the multitude of your sorceries. What is sorcery at its heart? Sometimes in the Greek, this will be pharmakeia.

And even in the Old Testament Hebrew, it suggests that this involves appeal to chemicals, to secret arts, to divining, to necromancy, to converse and consort with the dark arts, perhaps with demons and so on. But this is an alternative to God. I'm not going to achieve my goals.

I'm not going to accomplish my objectives by legitimate means. I will do it by my own wisdom. Multitude of your sorceries, the great abundance of your enchantments.

I will get this done kind of like the Egyptian magicians when Moses and Aaron demonstrate the power of God. They say, well, we can do these things. We can throw our rods down and they will become snakes.

Sorry, I just shot one tonight. So they're a little on my mind. Verse 10, you have trusted in your wickedness.

You have said, no one sees me. This is seize in the sense of seize and holds to account. I am not accountable to anyone.

And I believe that my wicked ways are the best way. I have declared myself to be righteous and I trust in wickedness. No one sees me.

And here's back to the Chaldean idea here in the middle of verse 10, your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you. And you have said in your heart, I am and there was no one else beside me. I am self-sufficient.

I can solve my own problems. I can engineer a better way and a better world and a better situation out of my own self-appointed wisdom. Verse 11, therefore evil shall come upon you.

You shall not know from where it arises and trouble shall fall upon you. You will not be able to put it off and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know. Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude of your sorceries in which you have labored from your youth.

Perhaps you will be able to profit. Perhaps you will prevail. This of course is a bit of divine sarcasm.

You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you. Just look at the range of talking heads, defending and extolling a lot of what's going on today as a way forward.

Look at verse 14. They shall be as stubble. The fire shall burn them.

They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. It will not be a coal to be warmed by nor a fire to sit before. You notice in recent days, and again, I don't like to get into a lot of, you know, current events or political commentary, but a lot of people think, well, you have to burn something down before you can replace it with something better.

This is not a good fire. This is not a beneficial warmth. Thus, verse 15, shall they be to you with whom you have labored, your merchants from your youth.

They shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you. There is a distinction within the ones who claim to be the people of God in the beginning of chapter 48.

We'll take a look at that. When we come back from the break, we're also going to see the origin of the Babylon has fallen quotation in Revelation. But in terms of application of what we have seen thus far, it is not hard to realize that these prophecies, these descriptions have been pertinent in every age since Isaiah first put pen to parchment so many years ago.

They have served as a touchstone, as spiritual guidance for God's people down through the generations, never more pertinent than now, never more pertinent than today as we find ourselves in the midst of a Babylon with a false religion, a religion of materialism, of science, of man achieving man's goals by man's efforts and man's wisdom. And it is incumbent upon the faithful people of God to come out from among them and be ye separate. Don't be taken in, don't be carried along, don't be fooled by the false promises and the short-term prospects of those who will not sit as a widow and will not worry about losing children because they've got a better way than God's fundamental foundational institutions that are the basic fabric of any nation, of any empire, of any condition or situation where people have the opportunity to come to faith in God, be blessed, be brought to the place of service and function, laying hold of righteousness by faith.

It cannot happen when you have the whore of Babylon sitting on her perch and devastating everything that the people of God stand for. So be alert, watch and pray. God will always redeem his people.

He will preserve us. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. You will see that in chapter 48 and how important it is to be identifiable as the faithful people of God so that those things can

take place.

But we'll see more of this when we come back from our break.