

Rev 26-05-06a

Greetings fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church and anyone else interested in excavating these wonderful piles of treasure in the book of Revelation. We're going to continue our study tonight looking at spiritual Babylon, the mystery that is Babylon, revealed in chapters 17 and 18 of this great final communication from the Lord Jesus Christ directed to us, His body, the Church. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin.

Father, we are thankful, we are excited to have this portion of your word preserved and delivered to us with truths that sustain us now and prepare us for the ages to come. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will bless it to each of our hearts, give us insight, help us to see the practical application, the meaning that it has in our thought life, the conversations in which we engage, the actions that we perform, so that the life that we live and the time that remains to us will be pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. We ask it in Jesus name, Amen.

Looking at our passage, if you're not already there, you might turn to the page or two that represents Revelation 17 and 18. There is a school of thought represented by my forebears and antecedents at Dallas Theological Seminary, particularly Dr. John Walvoord and Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost in the books and articles and writings that they have left to us that divides the Babylon that we see in these two chapters into two entities, religious or ecclesiastical Babylon represented by the woman in chapter 17, the scarlet harlot and the city of Babylon, political Babylon, national or governmental entity Babylon that is in chapter 18. And so they describe the destruction both in terms of doing away with this woman who represents some sort of religious or religio-political domination over governments in 17, and then the economic and a world power juggernaut that represents the Babylon of the final three and a half years of the 70th week in chapter 18.

I personally respect the work of those that have gone before me. I am intrigued as I've said, and I wonder if you have had this thought, it seems to me there's an awful lot of judgment. This is harsh, world-ending judgment that we have depicted, especially in the trumpet judgments, whatever the content of the thunder judgments and the bowl judgments that we have previously seen.

And then you have this tremendous, utter and complete destruction that scripture says takes place in one hour. In one hour, this Babylon becomes a smoking ruin. But I keep thinking about the long centuries of oppression, persecution, murder, theft in the name of the greater good, self-righteous, arrogant domination, cruelty, perversity that you can read throughout history that I believe this Babylon represents.

I think the woman has been sitting on top of this beast ever since the first head and possibly before that, which I think is Egypt. Remember the seven heads, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, revived Rome, which is the sixth, and then the seventh. I left somebody out there.

I'm going to start over. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, then the revived Rome, which is the seventh, and then the eighth that partakes of the first seven. But this is the beast of the latter part of that age of Israel, the 70th week.

But if the first head is Egypt, and the second head is Assyria, and the third head is Babylon, and the fourth is Medo-Persia, this entity has been dominating, controlling, seducing, persuading, and otherwise manipulating the beast pretty much back to the dawn of history. And I think this judgment is representative not just of the incarnation of this situation that will pertain in that 70th week, but I think this speaks of God's condemnation and judgment on every iteration, every generation, every manifestation of this relationship. So it is larger than any one empire, any final empire.

It's larger even than the first beast, often called the Antichrist. John never calls him that. But this is a transcendent judgment on every aspect, every expression that has ever taken place in history.

And that's why the judgment is so severe. Because of that, what is it that can dominate, control, and rule over the nations of the earth? Turn with me quickly back to Luke chapter 2. That'll get us close. This is the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have in John 3, the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, taking him all the way back to Adam, the son of God. And then in chapter 4, Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for 40 days by the devil. And in those days he ate nothing.

And afterward, when they had ended, he was hungry. And the devil said to him, If you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread. But Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

This is going to be important in our review of the sevenfold nature of Babylon coming up here in a little bit. Then the devil, taking him to up on a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. All the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

I find this resonates with the one hour in which all the kingdoms of the earth are going to see Babylon destroyed. All the kingdoms. And the devil said to him, All this authority I will give you and their glory, for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

So with this in mind, Luke chapter 4, verse 6. Who do you think the woman sitting astride the beast with seven heads representing kingdoms and ten horns representing kings who have not yet received a kingdom, other kinds of authority, corporate authority, economic authority, social authority, political authority. Whatever form it takes in that final time, there are those who have never had a kingdom and a government and yet have dominated. You can think of people who are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to influence political campaigns, to determine the

course of stock markets and investments and politics the worldwide.

These are kings without a kingdom. They are horns, they are powers that exert a kind of authority that doesn't rely on a government alone. But the devil has authority over all the kingdoms of the earth and he gives it to whomever he wishes.

I think this woman down through the ages represents those who are given authority to rule as emperors, as kings, and also to influence those and to dominate them down through the ages. And I would bring to your attention back in Revelation the vision that John saw back in chapter 12. In chapter 12 of the Revelation, a great sign appeared in heaven.

There's a woman clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, garland of 12 stars, has a child. Another sign appears in great fiery red dragon, seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems on his head. So in this case, it is Satan's policy, his personhood, his presence, and his purposes in pursuing the woman represented by this beast.

We now are looking at this same beast and seeing that Satan is not the beast itself, he is the controlling power, the authority, and the energy, and the ruling potential that operates and controls this beast. And he does it through proxies, he does it through earthly entities that have accepted the offer the Lord rejected back in Luke chapter 4 and have become his minions, his servants, his representatives on the earth. But in a strange twist, you have the woman representing Israel back in chapter 12.

You have Satan represented by the dragon. Now we have the dragon and we see that the woman is not the target of the beast, but a different woman is its master and controller, or mistress you might say. I sit as queen.

Of course, God never prescribed a government in Israel that would be led by a queen. The one time it happened, do you remember who the queen was? It's a trick question because there were two, one in the north and one in the south. Who was the queen in Israel in the north? Jezebel.

Who was the queen in Judah down in the south? Her daughter Athaliah. Queens in charge in the Bible, that doesn't fare well. But here, this woman says, I sit as queen and am no widow.

And she dominates this beast. So the beast is in many ways a pawn of Satan, a tool of Satan. Kingdoms, governments, when they are not populated with people, blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord, will be turned over to these kinds of satanic programs and purposes.

So all of this is important for us right now, because you can't just say, well, there's going to be a Babylon and its destruction is going to be great. Fallen, fallen is Babylon, the great mother of harlots. In one hour, judgment has come upon her.

People are sitting afar off looking at it. There is Babylon in every generation, in every period of history, going back to the dawn of time. We have Babylon right now.

There is the governmental aspect represented by the beast with the heads and the horns that exists right now. And it doesn't exist simply to achieve governmental ends or rulership policies. It isn't just Congress trying to get legislation passed.

It's not the executive branch. It's not the judicial branch in our government. It isn't the kings and rulers and prime ministers and other leaders around the world accomplishing their agenda.

Satan is at work. The kingdoms of the earth belong to Satan. They belong to him.

The Lord Jesus didn't say, you're wrong. They're really mine. In Luke chapter four, Satan is the God of this world.

We should be extremely careful, judicious, and a bit suspicious when government seeks to control our lives to the extent that it interferes with our spiritual priorities, such as telling us we cannot assemble for worship, as a recent example. Whatever the pretext, most of the time, as far as it is up to us and possible, we should live peaceably. We should fear God and honor the king, obey those that have the rule over us, and so on.

But if it impinges on our spiritual priorities, if it involves us in evil, this is when we go from Babylon. We leave Babylon. You will remember we rehearsed these principles recently in our view of Jeremiah and Isaiah, the repeated commands to Israel to go from Babylon.

Well, the upshot of this is that we have a number of descriptions given to us of Babylon in chapter 18, in terms of the merchandise that she exchanges with the merchants. You remember this, and last time, on Sunday, we saw that this description that is mourned by the merchants of the earth in chapter 18, starting at verse 11, the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her. No one buys their merchandise anymore.

This is what Babylon trafficked in. This is what the prostitution brought to her. By prostituting herself, these are the goods that came in.

We saw that they fell into seven categories. So there's a reason why you have verses 12 and 13, and it is so detailed. The first group is in verse 12, merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls.

And you can draw a little line after that or circle that. That's the first group. And we saw that that represented the things that people take to themselves to build up their sense of self-worth in Scripture.

We saw this in Corinthians. How do you build on the foundation of Christ? It can be gold and silver and precious stones or wood, hay and stubble. Which is it? We have a choice of whether we seek earthly treasure or heavenly treasure.

So Matthew chapter 10, verse 41. If you're organizing your notes, we're looking at the sevenfold description of Babylon and what that means to us. People come to this description that the merchants are mourning over and gloss right over it.

The Lord Jesus gave us this to warn us what characterizes Babylon. And in each of these seven areas, we make a choice. Am I a citizen of Babylon or am I a citizen of the New Jerusalem? Is it Satan's capital or is it God's capital? Am I involved in the unholy trinity, which can either be the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, or me, myself and I? Have I been deflected and distracted into living and serving and being comfortable in Babylon? Or am I, like Abraham, waiting for a city whose founder and builder is God? So Matthew 10, verse 41.

The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet receives a prophet's reward. Think about that. Some people would look at a prophet.

He seems unsupported. He doesn't, there's no advantage to be gained. Why would you value a prophet and receive a prophet? You have to be someone who values prophecy, right? This is someone who has the word of the Lord.

I, this is my value system. There is nothing more precious to me than insight and understanding in the word of God. Here is someone who can communicate it.

He is a prophet. People don't go to 10, 41 of Matthew enough. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.

You think of the great pastors and teachers that have given us so much insight and understanding in the word of God. The great, great heads of the past. I love to dig up old commentaries and find my notes on those that have done the hard work of interpreting as the aforementioned Dr. Walvoord and Dr. Pentecost and many others I could name.

C.H. McIntosh J. Vernon McGee, so many who have been grinding at the millstone and making the word of God understandable and memorable to us. We receive them and because we love them for the message that they bring and the content that they provide. If you love that, you are going to partake of the those great men of faith are party to and will receive.

It's a promise from the Lord Jesus. Receive a prophet because he's a prophet. You will receive a prophet's reward.

And the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person, you have to know what righteousness is. Is value in gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls on the earth? Or is it the heavenly equivalent, heavenly treasure? If you recognize heavenly value, that is what you will enter into. You will receive a righteous person's reward.

A great reward is promised to those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake. If you are ostracized, if

you are rejected, if you are passed over, if you are set aside, if you get the cold shoulder, or worse. This is pretty much the extent of the consequences in our country.

But there are those in other parts of the world who are losing their lives for their faith. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the son of man, Jesus says. Once again, Luke 6, 22 and 23.

Rejoice in that day. You don't see very many people rejoicing when they are canceled, when they are shut out, when they are elbowed aside, when they are kicked to the curb, thrown into the gutter, or worse. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy.

For look, your reward is great in heaven. These people that are doing this, especially the religious hypocrites, their fathers did that to God's prophets. I've been going through the book of Jeremiah and the things that Jeremiah suffered because he was faithful and true to the word of God, telling people they needed to submit to God's judgment instead of resisting it, didn't go over.

It wasn't popular. Quite the opposite. There are crowns.

2 Timothy 4, 8. Paul says, Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day, not to me only, but also to all who have loved his appearing. I'm not invested in this world. There are people who are actually going to be a bit sorry that they've built such a wonderful feathered nest here when the Lord appears and you have to leave it all behind.

It's Lot's wife looking over her shoulder. We don't want to be that. Jesus is going to bring his reward with him, and that is the reward that counts.

We're going to see this coming up in Revelation 22, 12. Behold, I am coming quickly, bringing my reward, my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done. People tend to think that's all good stuff.

Each one is going to receive according to what they have done, both good and not good. When the Lord Jesus is our treasure, then whatever we are stewards of, our money, our time, our talents, our spiritual gifts, we view those as priorities. We allot our time.

We reserve our energy. We allocate our resources for that purpose. We remember who we are and why we're here.

Our motivation is important. What we do, we should do to the glory of God, not to the satisfaction of Sam or to the well-being of those around me. We have responsibilities.

We have opportunities to bless and to be a blessing, but the priority in doing that is to please the Lord. Do all to the glory of God, not to the glory of me. I don't want to be appreciated for what I do.

I want people to appreciate God for what he enables and allocates all of us to do. We are agency. When there's a beautiful statue created, I don't thank the chisel or the hammer.

I appreciate the sculptor. Paul encourages the servants of God that there is an eternal reward for that service. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

How easy on a Tuesday late morning is it to remember that you're working not for a paycheck, not for a boss, not to get an immediate task accomplished, but toward an inheritance in the eternal future. We get so caught up. We are so plugged in.

We are subsumed by schedule and by opportunity and by obligation to be invested. I've got to get this done. When we remember that we are the Lord's, we are his body.

We are here to represent him. We will step back and remember that it isn't what happens in the human world or human evaluation. And I'm quoting Colossians 3, 23 and 24.

Whatever you do, do it with all your heart as unto the Lord, not unto men. You know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

In the same way that we don't want to take credit when it is God using us, we just want to hold our edge as a chisel. Just stay sharp and let God do what God does and let God get the glory. Jesus told his disciples this in early days, let your light so shine before men that they see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven.

We should do them in such a way that people's attention is turned to the source, to the author, to the creator, to the author and finisher of our faith, the father and the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy spirit. Matthew 10, 42, what we do for each other. We should always have one eye on the Lord.

Whoever gives one of these little ones, even a cup of cold water, because he is a disciple. Truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. I love it when I go to tune a piano and I'm in the home of believers.

It's obvious there's verses and hymnals everywhere. The lady practices to play at church and so on, and they'll offer me a bottle of cold water. And I always tell them, I accept this in the name of the Lord, because that's the way you're offering it.

And I know you're going to get a reward. Wonderful piece of fellowship. Matthew 6, 16, when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites for they disfigure their faces so that their fasting may be seen by others.

Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. Whatever momentary notice, whether there's genuine admiration or pity and a shaking of the head, why are you wasting your time? Whatever

that is, that's the only reward they receive. We are not looking for how it is perceived or received by people.

Hebrews 6, 10, we're still on number one. This is what kind of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls are we after? You want the heavenly kind that never perish or the earthly kind that can be stolen, can be lost, that we can't keep, can't take with us. Hebrews 6, 10, God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints.

Our love for the Lord is evident as we serve one another. 1 Corinthians 3, 8, he who plants and he who waters are united, they're one, they have a common goal and each will receive his wages according to his labor. Matthew 19, 16 through 30.

Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? Jesus said to him, why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter into life, keep the commandments. He said, which ones? Jesus said, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, not steal, not bear false witness, honor your father and mother and love your neighbor as yourself.

The young man said to him, all these I have kept, what do I still lack? Jesus said to him, if you would be complete, if you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. People have misunderstood this, that it's wrong to own anything or have any kind of wealth. It's wrong when it becomes a problem.

If you can't part with it, if you don't see it as a stewardship, it's time for you to sell it. Can you do that? Those individuals who are already there, who already know what they have belongs to the Lord and they are merely stewards, don't have to divest themselves. But those that are obsessed, that are locked in, too invested in this world, that is their test.

Can you give it up? And of course he went away sorrowing because he had great riches and put to that test, he did not pass. We have to evaluate ourselves and see how invested are we in the things that we have. And there is a warning in 2 John 1, verse 8, watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

Distraction, deflection, apathy, indifference, failing to remember the purpose, the stewardship can result in loss. Looking at the scriptures as we are doing here, that the Lord Jesus delivered to the church, this book of Revelation, it's going to be a wonderful asset for those who actually live through the 70th week, but it is more important for us. That's why it is prefaced with the letters to the seven churches, with the image of the glorified Lord, commissioning John to deliver this message, this entire book to us.

So even in these seemingly excess details, the merchants of the earth weep and mourn, no one buys their merchandise anymore. The citizens of Babylon didn't see the spiritual treasure, didn't see the spiritual opportunities. Instead, they are caught up in the world.

And when the worldly things disappear, they are gone. And those who are associated with them mourn and will not be comforted. There is no upside.

There is no future. There is no potential. There is no inheritance, heavenly Jerusalem or earthly Babylon.

That is our choice. Well, that's the first of the seven in terms of how do we watch out? What does scripture tell us to give us the full armor so that the fiery darts of Satan don't penetrate and lead us down this path? That's number one. We'll look at the remaining when we come back from the break.