

Rev 26-05-20a

Greetings, it is Wednesday night here at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 20th of May, 2026. We're continuing our journey through the book of Revelation.

We're in chapters 17 and 18. We are going to largely conclude our look at these chapters so that we can move forward to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus that is depicted in chapter 19. We have a few more details to observe, some details to clean up, some understandings to gain before we depart this very fascinating look at the dominance, ultimate destruction of the mystery which is Babylon.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we will begin. Father, we are grateful for the privilege of possessing your word. We have personal copies we can peruse and investigate at any time.

It is a tremendous blessing that was seldom granted to those in the days of history past, but we know that this availability is because the end is near, and we need this communication from you for our daily application, our personal progress, our preparation for the ages which are to come. We pray that our study tonight and our fellowship will contribute to that goal. We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified, that he will be fixed at the center of our attention, our focus, and our motivation.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Looking at our passage, you'll remember how drastic is the contrast between the historic dominance and the ultimate fall of Babylon. One of the seven angels in chapter 17 who had the seven bulls came and talked with me, saying to me, come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.

This is a key, the judgment of the harlot when we find out that her name is Babylon, and we see the proclamation given a few pages ago, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. This was back in chapter 14, verse eight. Another angel says, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Oddly enough, this allusion to fornication is a key to understanding what's going on in Revelation 17 and 18. I don't know how often this has really been noticed or picked up, but looking at the 21st chapter of Isaiah, you can probably have a nice crease here at Revelation 17 and 18, it'll be easy to return to it. But if you go back to Isaiah, find chapter 21, this is a difficult cross-reference to find, and yet it is crucial.

I am amazed if you Google Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and say, I want an Old Testament passage, it won't give it to you. At least it wouldn't give it to me. Maybe you'll have better success.

But I had to dig to find this because I knew I had read it probably back when we were studying Isaiah some years ago. But look at chapter 21 of Isaiah. You will remember that the first 39

chapters of Isaiah are quite the slog through failure, condemnation, and judgment on the part of God's people.

We did Isaiah verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and we just almost didn't make it through the wilderness of sin, Israel's sin. It felt like 40 years in the wilderness, wandering, waiting to get to that great hinge point, which is the spine of the book, and then the glorious second portion that is full of promise and hope and expectation for the future. You remember the 66 chapters of Isaiah conveniently, if not in an inspired fashion, help us remember the organization of the Bible itself with 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, forming a total of 66, and that's how many chapters.

And right at the end of the 39th chapter, you come to Isaiah chapter 40, and this is the turning point just as the New Testament opens with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a wonderful memory aid, but when you hear me say Isaiah 21, you say, wow, that is right in the middle of the dire path of darkness, where God is calling out the covenant failure, the disobedience, the apathy, the indifference, the outright rebellion and rejection on the part of His chosen people. And in the course of this, remember when Isaiah lived and prophesied.

He is in the closing days of the Southern kingdom of Judah. Isaiah and Jeremiah, you remember Isaiah prophesied to Hezekiah the king, and you've got the boil and the poultice and the rest of it happening, but this fixes him in time. And who is on the horizon about to come as the scourge that God uses to judge His own people? In 721, He said, Assyria is the rod of mine anger and the staff of my indignation.

And He used Assyria to judge His people as He had done with Egypt earlier. And you remember the seven heads of our beast, five have fallen. This is Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece.

One now is in the days that John wrote and recorded this vision, that is Rome. And there is a seventh yet to come, which is going to persist for a short time, but it is going to be superseded and set aside by an eighth. The eighth is of the seven, but it is Satan himself.

Oddly enough, we're going to see tonight that this ties in with this idea of harlotry, of seduction by exchange. Such an interesting concept. I never saw it before till studying these last few weeks.

But look at Isaiah 21. We've given ourselves some context, biblically and historically. And in my New King James, this chapter is titled, The Fall of Babylon Proclaimed.

Right away, we think, well, this might pertain to Revelation 17 and 18, since that is the subject, the fall of mystery Babylon. This is the proclamation of the original great kingdom of Babylon as it existed in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The burden against the wilderness of the sea.

Right away, we have a point of contact. Where did the beast arise that the woman rides? It's the

beast from the sea. The first great beast, right? It is from the sea.

She sits on many waters. Remember that? Revelation 17. She sits on the beast and presides over many waters.

Here is a prophecy against the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through, so it comes from the desert, from a terrible land. A distressing vision is declared to me.

The treacherous dealer deals treacherously and the plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam. Besiege, O Media.

All it's signed I have made to cease. Elam and Media, this is harking to the Medo-Persians, ultimately. So, they are going to deal treacherously.

They're going to plunder. All it's sighing I have made to cease. Therefore, my loins are filled with pain.

Pains have taken hold of me like the pains of a woman in labor. I was distressed when I heard it. I was dismayed when I saw it.

My heart wavered. Fearfulness frightened me. The night for which I longed, he turned into fear for me.

Prepare the table. Set a watchman in the tower. Eat and drink.

Arise, you princes. Anoint the shield. You remember the original fall of Babylon detailed in the book of Daniel under Belshazzar, eating and drinking, having a feast, unaware that this would be their last night until the handwriting on the wall, the finger of God and the interpretation by Daniel himself.

Verse six, for thus has the Lord said to me, go set a watchman and let him declare what he sees. So important for us to essentially, spiritually set a watchman. We are held in God's hands.

We know with certainty that he cares for us. He protects us. Nothing befalls us that isn't a part of his ultimate plan for our benefit and his glory, but watch and pray.

Watch, let no one deceive you. Be aware, watch the sky. Look at the signs.

You should know the signs of the times. So we keep track of what's going on in the world. We have to sift through the opinions and the twisted and distorted coverage, but we watch what is going on.

We watch for the forward progress of history and the alignment of nations, of factors, of circumstances that are consonant with, in keeping with the fulfillment of divine prophecy, which is given to us beforehand for our preparation, for our good. Set a watchman, let him declare what

he sees. In many cases, there are individuals in the church who are gifted with an interest in prophecy and a gift for its interpretation and its proclamation to the rest of the body of Christ.

There are a lot of people who don't have that gift and are trying to do it anyway, but those with level heads, with solid biblical foundation, with an eye on the sky and both eyes on the scripture can keep us posted on what is going on. There is a reason that there were those who were watching for the coming of the salvation of Israel in the person of Christ, the birth of the Christ child. They knew the times, they knew where they were in history.

They were sober, they were matter of fact, but they were watching. We should be the same, be sober, be vigilant, and don't let the enemy co-opt our interest by distracting and deflecting us from our mission. Set a watchman, let him declare what he sees.

And he saw a chariot with a pair of horsemen, a chariot of donkeys, a chariot of camels, and he listened earnestly with great care. Then he cried, a lion, my Lord. I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime.

I have sat at my post every night. And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen. Then he answered and said, does this sound familiar? Babylon is fallen, is fallen.

And all the carved images of her gods, he has broken to the ground. There is a second half to this chapter. This is enough to give us a bit of context.

I am ready now to ask you to open up your blue books, get out a number two pencil, and tell me why the watchman sees a chariot of horsemen, a chariot of donkeys, and a chariot of camels. Did you ever see a chariot drawn by camels? Did you ever see a chariot drawn by donkeys? And it doesn't say a chariot drawn by horses. It says a chariot with horsemen.

So the focus is on the drivers rather than the means of locomotion. What on earth is going on? Let me offer you a quick summary of just this portion of Isaiah chapter 21. In ancient days, the chariot was the tank.

It was the armored cavalry, if you will. And they were fast. They could appear suddenly and without warning.

They were war machines, and they were used for decisive strikes. They would open a path for the troops carrying shields and swords and spears. They were the elite cavalry, and it took empires who could afford to build them in the same way that in the modern day, the richest nations are the ones that can afford the latest and most sophisticated armaments.

So Assyria and later Persia built and equipped themselves with chariots. Donkeys were the logistical train. They carried couriers, supplies, and nobles.

Nobles would often appear riding on donkeys. This reflects on the Lord Jesus and the triumphal

entry. And this was the logistics.

We talked about this in regard to our acronym, Babylon. When you get to L, it's logistics, provisions, supplies. Where do I look for my confidence and my security when it comes to those provisions? Camel riders were desert forces.

You know this. Lawrence of Arabia just iconically is pictured with camels and so on. Arabia and Elam, these are the desert areas.

And these nations, these forces were able to flank Babylon from unexpected directions. So when you take this in concert, you've got the regular chariots and horsemen, you've got camels, and you've got donkeys, also bearing burdens and bringing things. This is reflective of a coalition of nations.

This is a group of nations that are banded together with a common objective to destroy Babylon. Think about our chapters 17 and 18. Remember when the 10 kings decide together to be of one mind with the beast, and they turn and are going to tear mystery Babylon to pieces, it isn't an individual.

It's not just Satan himself that decides he's had enough of using the woman for his ends and subjugating his plans for empires across the centuries to this woman. This is a coalition. This is an agreement.

These have united to accomplish this objective. So again, the mix of horses and donkeys and camels, God is going to use, without their being aware of it, different, diverse entities to accomplish this judgment on the woman. And he is going to put it into their hearts to be of one mind with Satan.

He's going to encourage them to go with what they've chosen. Just as he did with Assyria. You can go back to Isaiah 10, verse five.

I just quoted it earlier. Assyria is my instrument of judgment. The watchman seeing these things appear on the horizon, these chariots and these camels, donkeys, and horsemen, is a sign of coming invasion.

It can be seen before it happens. It can be seen as it happens if you've posted a watchman, if you're watching. And this is a fulfillment of 21.9, which is our parallel passage.

Difficult to find, but parallel to our chapter 14 pronouncement by the angel. Babylon is fallen, is fallen. Babylon the great.

These details are a reminder of God's omniscience, God's omnipotence, God's control of human history. And as we believers endeavor to live our lives, invest the time that we have given to us each day to redeem it so that the days don't go to the default and end up being evil, redeeming

the time because the days left to themselves are evil. We're aware that God is in charge.

God sets the rules. God sets the standards. God determines the timing of all things.

He has known from the foundations of the world who is for him and who is against him. We'll see that again in our passage. So God's plan operates with precision.

It's not vague. It's not unclear. It's not uncertain.

And as God has unfolded it to his servants, the prophets, that is exactly what is going to happen. There is a spiritual application here. We'll review for a final time, our understanding of Babylon and how she seduces people into compliance and into going along with the plans and programs and purposes of Satan.

We do not want to be sucked into that. We don't want to be deceived. We don't want to be waylaid.

We don't want to be led down a dark alley to the harlot's lair. We want to be on the narrow road headed to the straight gate that leads to life. And these pictures were given to us by the Lord Jesus in the book of Revelation, not so that we would have a prophecy map, not so that we could have a helpful chart of nations, what they're going to do and when they're going to do it.

All of this is written for our instruction so that we can live today, tomorrow, and whatever remains to us in this life, aware and alert and dedicated to the glory of God, not the purposes of Satan. It is given to us metaphorically. It's given to us in wonderful, memorable ways.

But when it all comes down to it, how do we live our life? When we think, when we pause to reflect, when we make decisions, when we engage in conversations, when we set our priorities and say, you know, this is what I'm going to get done today at work, at home, in relationships, in conversations, in hobbies, in spare time. Why do I do what I do? It's right in the middle of the word Babylon. Why am I living my life as I live it? Am I doing all to the glory of God? Do I pray without ceasing? Am I aware that this is just preparation and training and practice for the eternal ages to come? Or am I caught up in the story problem? Am I so immersed in the movie that when a door slams, I jump? It's just a movie.

It's not real life. And this life is just training. It is preparation.

It is conditioning us, equipping us for every good work, both now and in the ages to come. We have to remember who we are and why we're here. How do people go wrong, get in trouble, have unwanted pregnancies, strange extended families with a set of kids here and an ex-wife there and an ex-husband here and a boyfriend there and a affair here and something that comes back to bite them there? Not thinking clearly in a moment of decision.

Girls on dates, young men who fail to recognize their responsibility to the parents of that girl if

they take her out on a date. Responsibilities to the future, to not engage in momentary, immediate gratification at the expense of opportunities and peace and blessing in the future. It's seduction.

It is blinding the mind in a moment of decision and there are consequences untold, unforeseen from these bad decisions. That's why Babylon is represented as the harlot and the mother of harlots. She is a seductress.

That's why 10 chapters that open Proverbs picture the crafty harlot contrasted with lady wisdom. Here is the mind that has wisdom we see in our passage, whether it is the mark or what the nature of this woman is as she is depicted. Here is the mind that has wisdom and then it describes this woman, where she sits, what supports her.

So a few passages. God is in control of history. If you go to Amos chapter three, verse seven, I'll read it to you if you don't have time to turn there.

Surely the Lord God does nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servants, the prophets. A lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken. Who can but prophesy? Just as we see in our Isaiah 21 passage, a lion appears, a lion has roared.

Ultimately, this will be the lion of the tribe of Judah. God reveals his will to us and that calls for response, for belief, for faith, for obedience. Are we too much in this world? Do we really think that life is getting things done, getting a check, getting the groceries, getting things accomplished, living through the day without great injury, grabbing a little pleasure and stimulation here and there, a little bit of entertainment, a little bit of rest.

To rest, falling asleep, you know, go to the ant, thou sluggard, you remember that passage. It's easy to take our ease and forget who we are and why we're here. So few believers understand what we are looking at tonight.

We are the point of the spear. We are at a time in human history where God is relying on you and relying on me to represent the Lord Jesus Christ while there is still time for witness and testimony, while there is still time to redeem these opportunities and prepare for service and function now and in the ages to come. We are not our own.

We were bought with a great and precious price. And that calls on us to glorify God in our thoughts, in our conversation, in our actions. We're not here like any godless, secular, materialistic unbeliever to just chew through a day and prepare for the next one.

Anybody can do that. Only you and I, equipped with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, enlightened by the word of God that shines on our path, that enables us to not sin and to move forward. Only we can do this supernatural task to which we have been called, for which we have been anointed and gifted and thoroughly equipped.

So are we going to do it? Or are we going to fall back asleep after Bible class is over and go back to the knee-jerk default, human viewpoint passage through life? What a tragedy to have glimpsed the powers of the age to come and then fall back and impossible to even be renewed to repentance so long as we forget that the Lord Jesus was crucified for us to give us this opportunity. That's what these passages are talking about. It's not prophecy so that we can wear a propeller hat and watch the skies and hope that we hear the shout and the voice and the trump of God.

Watching for the dead in Christ to rise. This is a wonderful, glorious culmination of our time here on earth. But while we are here, what an opportunity to live differently than the world, live differently than uninformed believers who have been lulled to sleep by the siren song of what the world has to offer.

That is the seduction. That's why Babylon is a harlot, and that's why she is ultimately fallen, doubly so, exponentially so. Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city that has seduced the kings of the earth and all who are subject to them.

So how important is it for us to understand this? Be sure you have Isaiah chapter 21, verse nine in the margin of your Bible at Revelation 14, verse nine, actually it's verse eight. And again, here in our passage. So what are we supposed to take away from all of this? We saw the sevenfold merchandise.

This is the key to understanding what is about to unfold as we move forward. Think about a harlot. What does a harlot do? She exchanges favors of a physical nature for material goods.

There is an exchange. Harlots don't work for free. They are paid.

It is commerce. It is merchandise on offer. You will remember once again in the book of Isaiah, when you go to chapter 14, verse 12 and following, how you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of darkness.

Not the dawn. The word is the lifting of darkness. That's why they think it's dawn.

Darkness lifts, but the word there, shakar, is darkness. And is so used talking about eyebrows and other things elsewhere in scripture. How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations, weakened the nations, took away their power, took away their strength, got them to exchange their strength for something momentary, a figment, a promise unfulfilled, fruit that turns to ashes in the mouth.

You said in your heart and you have the five I wills, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, above the angels. God is the God of the angels, just as he is the God of the human race.

Satan says, I can do that. By extension, if he can raise his throne above the stars, he can certainly raise his throne above human beings. And God has granted him that throne.

He is the God of this world. I will sit in the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.

I will be like the most high, that you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you and consider you saying, is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of its prisoners? You see the echo of the destruction, the ultimate destruction of Satan in the destruction of Babylon. Babylon is going to receive what she dished out.

We're going to see this upcoming. Verse 19, you are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch, like the garment of those who are slain, thrust through with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a corpse trodden underfoot. You will not be joined with him in burial because you have destroyed your land and slain your people.

The brood of evildoers shall never be named. Prepare slaughter for his children. All those who follow Satan are going to share his fate.

Those who get in bed with Babylon are going to share in her plagues. We saw this in the letter to Thyatira, back in the first couple of chapters of this book, where those who commit adultery with Jezebel are thrown into her bed and are going to share in her fate. Verse 22, for I will rise up against them.

This is still Isaiah 14. Verse 22, I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant and offspring and posterity, says the Lord. I will make it a possession for the porcupine, marshes of muddy water.

I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the Lord of hosts. That doesn't sound good. I'm not interested in being swept with a broom of destruction.

Look at Ezekiel chapter 28. In particular, we're going to see a reference to all of those things that we saw under the rubric of merchants weeping. Verse 12, son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre and say to him, thus says the Lord God, you were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering. The Sardius, topaz and diamond, beryl, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, emerald with gold.

Some of these are at the beginning of that list. The B, what do you build with? Is it gold, silver, precious stones and pearl? Workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the

day you were created. Actually, this is the task of allowing or preventing access to the throne room of God is what is being alluded to here.

He was the guardian cherub of the throne room of God. You were the anointed cherub who covers, who controls access. I established you.

You were on the holy mountain of God. You walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created until iniquity was found in you.

God didn't put it there. He chose it of his own accord. He thought his way into departure from God, rebellion and evil.

Notice verse 16, put Revelation 17 and 18 beside this and the margin by the abundance of your trading, you became filled with violence within and you sinned. Satan began to leverage and broker his power. He began to require remuneration for access to God's throne.

He posed as an intermediary and began to acquire unrighteousness and unrighteously the use of the power of God. God has power, but you're not going to be able to access it without me as an intermediary. He's skimming off the top as it were.

He's become a broker where he takes profit by these transactions. Therefore, God says, I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God. And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, O guardian of the throne room, from the midst of the fiery stones.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. Remember that A in Babylon, appearances, the purple and scarlet, the fine linen, the gold, the jewelry, the trappings, corrupted his wisdom.

And created arrogance, became obsessed with his own appearance. I cast you to the ground. I laid you before kings that they might gaze at you.

You defiled your sanctuaries. You defiled those unique and special forms of access. A sanctuary is a place where only those who are qualified can enter.

The Holy of Holies was the innermost sanctum in the tabernacle. The Holy of Holies was the innermost sanctuary of the temple. The Holy place is a sanctuary.

The Holy of Holies is the highest sanctuary. You defile your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading. Once again, exchange.

This idea of exchange is central to understanding what we're looking at in Revelation and the means by which God is going to destroy Babylon. We, by way of application here for our first session, need to be careful that we are not consciously or unconsciously leveraging our access,

using people for our gratification, for our benefit, to accomplish our purposes, leaning on them, in some cases, sort of creating a sense of guilt, guiltning people into doing what we want, shaming them into doing what we want, leaning on them in some way, overtly or covertly. We know them well enough that we can get them to do what we want.

We know their personality. We know their weaknesses. We know their tendency to want to do things for us.

And we begin to use that instead of being thankful and instead of being a blessing and a channel of divine power in their lives, we start to use them, the bodies and souls of men. Remember the N in Babylon? How do we treat our neighbor? Do we love our neighbor as ourself? Do we try to draw them into the one another category? Or are we using them? And we need to be honest with ourselves. We often won't admit that that's what we're doing.

Well, this is an exchange. This is merchandise. This is commerce.

I will give you what you want if you give me what I want. And this is how Satan fell. We want to watch for it.

We're going to see it both in Babylon's ascendancy, riding the beast and in her downfall coming up when we come back from the break.