

Text: Rev. 17:1-6

Title: "God's verdict for the judgment of Babylon"

Time: 4/22/2018

Place: NBBC

Intro: In our passage the kingdom of antichrist is called *Babylon*. That is an important name in Scripture. Babel was the place in Genesis 11 where mankind first arose in global opposition to the Creator. God confused their languages there to stop them.

Babylon was the world empire of Nebuchadnezzar, which God used to destroy disobedient Judah. And now the future kingdom of antichrist, in its worldwide influence against the Anointed One of God and His people, is seen in our passage this morning as Babylon the Great.

Revelation 17 and 18 contain four identifiable sections in its vision of this future form of Babylon:

- (1) God's verdict for the judgment of Babylon (17:1-6);
- (2) God's explanation of the mystery of Babylon (17:7-18);
- (3) God's description of the fall of Babylon (18:1-8); and finally,
- (4) two different reactions to the fall of Babylon. Some lament that fall and others rejoice over it (18:9-24).

This morning we will focus on the first section of chapter 17, God's verdict for the judgment of Babylon (v. 1, "I will show thee the judgment"). I want us to notice together three judgments God makes about this future kingdom of the antichrist.

As we do so, we also have to ask ourselves, "What do these judgments say about our own hearts and lives?" The Baby-

lon of Antichrist arises from what is in man's sinful heart, which finds the spirit of antichrist attractive in our day.

I. Babylon is judged to be a drunken whore; its pleasures are the lust of our flesh (vv. 1-2, 6; "sitteth" = "enthroned").

Illustration: Political power, religious infidelity, and sexual immorality often go hand in hand. As Baptists, we appreciate especially Thomas Jefferson as important to the religious freedom and separation of church and state we enjoy as a people, but Jefferson was a religious infidel and an immoral man.

There have been remembrances this year of the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the same could be said about him as well. Bill Clinton disgraced the office of the presidency with sexual sin, and our current president has amassed his fortune in large part because of his promotion of the sex industry. He has lived the life of an immoral fornicator.

Application: The coming world-wide kingdom of the antichrist is described that way in our passage - a drunken whore (v. 1b, "the great whore"; v. 2, "with whom . . . fornication"; v. 6, "the woman drunk"). Substance abuse and sexual promiscuity are problems in our society, but in the coming kingdom of the antichrist they will no longer be viewed as problems. It will be the new normal. We seem to be getting closer and closer to that day.

How should our lives be different as believers? How can our lives become different as believers? Paul answers both of those questions in Gal. 5:16-23. Verses 22-23 tells us how our lives as believers should be different from the normal of the coming Babylon. Paul elaborates on this topic further in

Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." So that is how our lives should be different from Babylon.

But how can they become different? There is only one guaranteed way: "Walk in the Spirit and you shall in no way [note the emphatic grammar in the original Greek] fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). That is a promise we can claim.

To walk in the Spirit is to spend time in fellowship with Him through the Word and prayer ("be walking in the Spirit" is present tense), and it is to realize that we are not under the condemnation of the law whenever our flesh gets the best of us (vv. 17b - the battle will often not go well; v. 18 - we are not under the law). We can confess our sin, be forgiven, and do better next time (1 John 1:9).

Babylon is judged to be a drunken whore. Jesus died on the cross to save us from that world. Our lives should be very different from it, but we must battle our flesh by walking in the Spirit to realize this difference.

II. Babylon is judged to be filthy rich; its possessions are the lust of our eyes (vv. 3-4).

Illustration: In Proverbs 29:3, God's Word warns us against harlotry: "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance." It is hard to read that verse without remembering that God inspired a young Solomon to write this Scripture. Solomon would live to violate his own Bible verse perhaps

more than any other man who ever lived. He multiplied wives and concubines and wasted the most glorious kingdom any earthly king ever possessed.

In chapter 7 Proverbs describes with great precision the tempting attraction of the harlotry that destroyed Solomon's kingdom. Verse 10 says this, "And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtle of heart."

The first notation in this biblical description of a harlot has to do with the way she is dressed — she has on "the attire of a harlot." Ladies, do you know what that is? Have we taught our daughters what that is? Have we shown them the difference that modesty makes when it comes to our clothing?

Solomon mentions the harlot's attire first because that is the first weapon in her arsenal that ultimately destroys the naïve man. That clothing is not just her weapon for his destruction; it is Satan's.

Application: Our passage mentions the attire of this harlot of Babylon (v. 4). There is an eye-attraction to this kingdom, which has to do especially with her riches and possessions. She is arrayed in expensive purple and scarlet. She is gilded with gold and jewelry and pearls. The cup she holds in her hand, full of abominations, is a golden cup.

Simply put, she is filthy rich, and those in support of her are made to share abundantly in those riches.

Well, we need to ask ourselves the same two questions here in regard to these possessions of Babylon, which we asked earlier in regard to the pleasures of Babylon: (1) how should

our lives as believers be different from this, and (2) how can our lives become different?

Jesus answers both questions in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:24-34). He speaks of two masters, only one of which we can worship and serve. God is one of the choices, the rightful Master. What is the other choice? Money.

So how should our lives be different than the coming kingdom of antichrist called Babylon? We should be people who worship and serve God instead of worshipping and serving money. These two will always be in competition for the servitude of our hearts and lives.

And then Jesus tells us how to do that. First, exchange little faith and lots of worry for lots of faith and little worry (vv. 25-32).

Second, prioritize the kingdom of God and his righteousness as the most important thing in your heart and life (v. 33). Do we prioritize God's kingdom over money? Do our lives say God's kingdom is more important to us or do they say money is more important to us?

Are we willing to give up that government handout because the subjects of God's kingdom are supposed to work for our living? Are we willing to put our other business on hold on Sunday in order to have the proper focus on worshipping Christ as He is worthy to be worshipped (Chick-fil-a has this down)? Are we willing to give generously to the Lord's work in terms of our time, talent, and treasure, or have we been stingy and selfish about these things?

When it comes to our attitude and actions related to money, we who have been saved out of Babylon should have hearts

and lives that are very different from that old kingdom. Do we?

III. Babylon is judged to be a shameless blasphemer; its pride is our pride of life (vv. 5-6).

III: Baseball season is just getting underway, and one of the unique things about the sport of baseball is that each baseball player proudly displays the name of his team on his forehead. As a Cleveland Indians fan, James has a Chief Wahoo hat with that logo proudly displayed on his forehead when he wears that hat.

Next year, the Indians are not going to be allowed to sell those hats anymore because the view is that Chief Wahoo is a caricature of an Indian. Some people believe that we should be ashamed, not proud, to wear the Chief on our baseball caps. As a now somewhat bitter Indians fan over this tragedy, I have come to the position that the Boston Celtic leprechaun is a caricature of an Irishman, so I will be looking forward to the day the Celtics have to erase him from the parquet floor [just kidding, by the way].

Application: This kingdom is a harlot who boldly displays a name on her forehead of which she is very proud: "A Mystery, Babylon the Great: The Mother of Prostitutes and the Abominations of the Earth."

She will feel no shame in calling herself *Babylon*, or *Mother of Prostitutes*, or *Mother of the Abominations of the Earth*. We live in a day in which sinners no longer feel shame over sin. From Woodstock to "Gay Pride" parades, our world has decided that it no longer has to be ashamed of these things.

Our President said once about a pornographic picture of his wife, our First Lady, "In Europe, pictures like this are very fashionable – and common" [Robert Brannon, "Donald Trump and the Sex Industry," *Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence* (December 2016): article 11]. This lack of shame is the pride of life.

Application2: Babylon's pride of life reaches its nadir in its treatment of the saints and witnesses of Jesus. She is drunk with their blood. She hates God's people and God's messengers, and she has acted on that hatred. Do we treat God's people and God's messengers with prideful contempt and even hatred?

So how should we be different, and how can we become different, when it comes to the pride of life? I think the apostle John handles this well in his first Epistle (1 John 4:4-2:1).

We must understand that the key to our fullness of joy (v. 4) is walking in the light as He is in the light (vv. 5-7). To do that, we must put away our pride and confess our sin. To say we have not sinned is the pride of Babylon. To say we have and to ask for forgiveness is the path to fullness of joy.

Conclusion: One thing we must say about the nature of this coming kingdom of the antichrist is that it is what it is because sinful men and women like us are what we are.

Babylon is a drunken whore, but we too have a flesh which desires the pleasure of the world. Babylon is filthy rich, and deep down inside the lust of our eyes tells us that it would be nice if we were too. Babylon hates God's people and God's servants in shameless blasphemy, and it is the pride of life that keeps us from repenting of our own selfishness

and changing to live in league with the people and witnesses of the Lord.

1 John 2:15 warns us that these lusts are what is in the world of the spirit of antichrist, and that if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Do we love the Father, or do we love the world that shall produce the Babylon of this chapter? If the later, we shall know her doom too unless we repent.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*