

Revelation 18

In 2012 six scientists were convicted in Italy of failing to give sufficient warnings about an earthquake that struck and killed 300 people in 2009. The case against them was built on the idea that they gave false assurances or underestimated the potential of an earthquake, even though experts point out that earthquakes are very difficult to predict.

Six years in jail for inadequately predicting an earthquake. Kind of crazy.

So what??

In studying Revelation, one might ask if the church, if we, are guilty of failing to give the necessary warnings of the Advent of Christ to our generation. Not the first advent of the baby Jesus, no crying he makes. But the final Coming of Christ who will judge the world with equity.

The book of Revelation is geared to move us into courage, faith, and proclamation of Christ to those who don't know Him.

This may seem like a strange passage for Advent, and yes, you may not find it in your typical Advent Devotional. It probably won't be the theme of a Hallmark Christmas movie.

That said, Advent is all about waiting for THE Christ, we remember his first coming – the Incarnation – his birth and the proclamations of the angels, etc.

AND we wait for the return of Christ in glory, and that is what we see all through the book of Revelation. When he returns, he is not coming as the baby Jesus in a manger. He is coming as the Conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Today we have a long passage, but I want to cover it all, so hold on.

Announcement and Warning

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. **2** And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! (Isaiah 21:9, Rev 14:8) She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. **3** For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

A messenger from heaven comes to bring the good news of the fall of Babylon just as Isaiah had done hundreds of years before (21:9)

Babylon has an economic or materialism problem. Here the fall is so certain that it is spoken of as if already done. Babylon becomes a deserted place - Isaiah 13. It is described as a demonic ghost town.

The audience would have heard Rome, but we see that Babylon is not just a place, but a spirit or ethos. It is the world outside the city of God. the world tends towards Babylon.

The Fall of Babylon is an anticipated result of the Advent of Christ.

When we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven", this is what we are praying for... WCFSC

Q. 102. What do we pray for in the second request?

In the second request (which is, Your kingdom come) we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed,[a] that the kingdom of grace may be advanced[b] and ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it;c] and that /Christ's return and/ the kingdom of glory may come quickly.[d]

This is why we sing a song about the return of Christ at Christmas.... Joy to the World

No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground;

He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, far as the curse is found

I like what I heard last week (Art Azurdia) and what Seth Julin said at community group...
If we take a big picture view of Revelation, we might say this book is about

A TALE OF TWO CITIES –
Babylon and New Jerusalem
City of Man vs The City of God (Augustine)
Impure Harlot vs A Pure Bride
A material realm vs A spiritual realm
Reliance on the kings of the earth vs. Reliance on God and the Lamb.

The descriptions we've seen in ch 16-17 of Babylon highlight two issues: 18:3
Sensual immorality and idolatrous materialism. Taken together they represent uncontrolled lust and a heart that is characterized by coveting.

EX: song from Dreamgirls "Jimmy want more
Gotta a home in the hills, Mercedes Benz
High swimming Pool, Got Lots of friends
Got clothes by the hanger , Credit to spare
Can wake up in the morning with nobody there
But Jimmy want more, Jimmy want more, Jimmy want, Jimmy want, Jimmy want more

Or the quote attributed to John D. Rockefeller, when asked, "How much money is enough?"
"Just a little bit more."

Two things try to knock us off the road to the City of God – the Beasts and the woman – Government and false religion. The woman tries to lure us off the road with the false promise of wealth, i.e. that our lives consist of what and how much we possess.

We stay on the road of the City of God by keeping our eyes on the end of the road – the exalted Lamb who is coming back as king. "*What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?*"

Charge v. 4 the Charge – Come out of her!

4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I SIT AS A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.' (ISAIAH 47) 8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

How to live in Babylon while still in Babylon?
It's about perspective, attitude, and values.

Epistle to Diognetus – what Christians were like under Rome *

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe...

... they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking [281] method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure

all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.

They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. [282] They have a common table, but not a common bed. [283] They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. [284] They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. [285] They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men and are persecuted by all...They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; [288] they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life...

In the world but not of the world. The church is called to confront the world by bringing a transforming power and ethic. We are to model the city of God while living in the city of man. The result may be persecution, or it may be that people see our good deeds and glorify God in heaven.

EX: Andrew with Dutch guy - "You Christians that I've been around are the most amazing people I've ever known. I want to know more." He is now studying the Bible with Andrew.

Does LaFayette look better because we and other churches are here?

v. 6-7 Babylon became smug boasting in her self-sufficiency, echoing the Laodiceans in ch 3:17

v. 7-8 Babylon's idolatry of materialism brings a quick judgement, that mirrors her own deeds, but we don't know when. "You reap what you sow."

But now comes what would seem to be the last warning to "come out from her" while there is still time. Come to Christ if you don't know him and hold fast to Christ if you do.

3 Laments – Kings, merchants, and mariners

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

11 "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more— 12 cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, 13 and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves(bodies), that is, human souls. 14 The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.

15 The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, 16 saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; 17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!'

And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' 19 And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!' (Is 13:19-22 never to be lived in again.)

v. 9 Kings weep and wail at the funeral of this Queen of Babylon

This queen's funeral is viewed from three perspectives, and we hear three laments from the kings of the earth.

When they lament, they stand outside the city. If it benefits them, they engage, but if not, they stand far off, in fear and horror. They lament because their source of wealth is gone. They have no way to satisfy their lust for wealth and luxury when Babylon falls.

v. 12-14 No market remains for the list of their goods to be sold. The harlot represents all corrupt economic systems as we see that even human souls are treated as commodities.

EX: you know you've found a Babylon when you see humans sold as bodies or commodities. This shamelessly violates the very fabric of the biblical worldview of people created in the image of God. Think of all the slave holding cultures throughout human history and even today where individuals are treated like merchandise. Think of the ways that human souls are treated as a commodity – human trafficking, surrogate births, abortion, the selling of the tissue or body parts of aborted babies, work conditions that treat people as expendable. In most of these, the victims are women or the most vulnerable.

In many parts of the world today humans / children are sold as commodities for work or sexual exploitation, and many in positions of leadership don't care. Sadly, Babylon is very much alive in the world.

Sadly, we in the church can get caught up in our petty disputes while ignoring the damage done by Babylon all around us. The early church was persecuted because they proclaimed another king, Jesus (Acts 17). That means that they didn't bow the knee to the cultural mottos and practices of Babylon's materialism and immorality.

Do we use the four walls of the church to be our fortress or do we seek to engage Babylon with the Eternal Gospel.

The kings, merchants, and mariners grew wealthy in Babylon and lived in luxury.

EX: The extravagance of Roman emperors and kings and rulers of most cultures. Lavish parties and feasts often accompanied by sensual exploitation.
Now they stand far off.

v. 18 they lament the fall of Babylon, as they saw the smoke of her burning. There is an OT PRECEDENT in Sodom and Gomorrah. The idolatry of materialism gets the same judgement as the idolatry of Sodom. Both represent attempts to find some sort of glory – meaning and significance – in something other than God.

Their lament is "WHAT CITY IS LIKE THE GREAT CITY?" In their unbelief and materialistic mindset, they couldn't imagine anything better than Babylon / Vanity Fair.

The answer to their lament, "What city is like the great city?" is the New Jerusalem, the City of God.

Do we lament the fall of Babylon, or do we look forward to what is in store – ch 19-21?

There is a better city coming where God and the Lamb are the light and where there are no tears. John writes the churches to encourage them to live for that city, not for Babylon?

v. 20 Heavenly Celebration

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

The news of the fall of Babylon is evidence that our suffering is not in vain. It shows that despite the verdict of the world, God judges for His church against the beasts and the harlot.

The bridegroom has put an end to cruelty inflicted on His Bride. Chap 19 will give us more insight into the heavenly response.

Finale v. 21 ff

21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. 22 And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; 23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth

(From Jer 51:63) He threw a millstone and a scroll into the Euphrates to show that ancient Babylon would sink to rise no more. – millstone is never recovered, no chance of recovery

V 22-23

"No more, no more, no more" is the refrain of these final verses. No money, food, light, music, or joy. NO MORE sounds of everyday life. Those expressions that are uniquely human are no more for mankind itself is reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold.

No more voices of the bride and bridegroom. It is a direct quote of Jeremiah about the destruction of Jerusalem.

I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate (Jer 7:34 NIV).

The opposite is seen in the City of God where there is light, joy, and the voice of rejoicing at the marriage of the Lamb and his bride.

V 23-24

Sorcery, idolatry, killing the saints

Ch 6 5th seal, How long will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

The answer is given here as Justice is meted out.

The talk of judgment may be strong for some of us. Rightly so. We're used to thinking that the troubles of Babylon don't affect us. We may be a bit like Treebeard...

Treebeard – LOTR Treebeard is the "oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-earth" as described by Gandalf.

In the battle of good and evil, the Ents were neutral and slow. "Don't be hasty."

When they finally enter into battle they give this explanation.

Likely enough that we are going to our doom: the last march of the Ents. But if we stayed at home and did nothing, doom would find us anyway, sooner or later. That thought has long been growing in our hearts; and that is why we are marching now. It was not a hasty resolve. Now at least the last march of the Ents may be worth a song."

Revelation is saying over and over, "Be alert, doom will find you."

You can't just stay inside the walls of the church and have a quiet neutral life. God has called us to walk in the obedience of faith in the Victorious Lamb.

COME TO THE TABLE... The only refuge from the doom to come is found in the sacrifice of Christ, represented in these elements.

This Table is the guarantee of the Ultimate Marriage Supper in the New Jerusalem

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<https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/fathers/diognetus/epistle-diognetus.asp?pg=7>
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/diognetus-lightfoot.html>

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