

Revelation: How to Live Through the End of the World

Part 3: Revelation Exposes the Truth: The System Behind the World's Evil

Revelation 17 and 18

Summary: Revelation exposes the hidden forces of evil shaping our world and calls us to resist the seductive power of Babylon.

Main Ideas:

We are entangled in a system that, whether we realize it or not, continually produces hell on earth.

Revelation shows us how to identify and resist the forces of Babylon.

Jesus offers us a choice. We can either live in Babylon or the KoG.

Babylon is any system that opposes God's kingdom by luring people into idolatry, corruption, and injustice.

4 Characteristics of Babylon:

- Wealth & Indulgence (Revelation 17:4)
- Obsession with Power & Image (Revelation 17:15)
- Pride & Self-Exaltation (Revelation 18:7)
- Exploitation & Oppression (Revelation 18:11-13)

The dragon, the beasts, and their empire of Babylon will be judged and destroyed.

Babylon wants our loyalty. So does Jesus. One ends in destruction-- the other in eternal life.

Invitation:

Read: Revelation 17 and 18 and reflect on the Characteristics of Babylon

Pray: Jesus, open my eyes to the ways Babylon has shaped my thinking and desires.

Ask: What is one way I can resist Babylon's influence this week?

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out, challenged, bothered, inspired, or confused you in this week's message?
2. In what ways do you see the characteristics of Babylon (wealth & indulgence, obsession with power & image, pride & self-exaltation, exploitation & oppression) influencing society today?
3. Read Revelation 18:4. How can we recognize when we are being shaped by Babylon's values rather than by Jesus' kingdom?
4. What is one specific way you can resist Babylon's influence this week and live out the values of the Kingdom of God?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Doesn't it feel like the world is unraveling?

- So many problems, so much injustice
- The people we trust to fix it seem only to make it worse.

The Book of Revelation pulls back the curtain and shows us what's really behind all the evil we see...

It explains all we see going on in our world...

A world where people with money, power, and connections can exploit other humans for their own pleasure

- While anyone who has the authority to do something about it either looks the other way or actively participates—regardless of political affiliation.

Where millions of people, including children, are still being bought and sold, fueled by greed and lust—yet some in power refuse to confront this crisis because it doesn't fit their political agenda.

Where corporations pretend to be champions of social justice while profiting from countries that practice child labor and human rights abuses.

Where we pride ourselves on being tolerant... until you disagree with us—then you need to be shamed, screamed at, dehumanized, and attacked.

Where keeping political control matters more than truth or integrity, and both sides are willing to manipulate, lie, or demonize opponents just to win.

And I could go on...

This is just the stuff we know about... if we really knew all that was going on, we would be convinced that hell has already come to earth.

But even worse, these problems aren't just "out there."

We are entangled in a system that, whether we realize it or not, continually produces hell on earth.

I'm not saying we want to create harm and hurt others,

- But we can't help but participate in this system b/c it's so subtle and normal for us.

We know something is wrong, but we can't see it, it's just this vague badness out there somewhere.

We aren't the 1st to have to live in this evil and corrupt world...

In Revelation, John shows us there is a system that runs underneath everything, shaping what we value and how we live

- A system in rebellion against God that John calls Babylon.
- And **Revelation shows us how to identify and resist the forces of Babylon.**

Rev shows us... There is hope... we don't have to be passive observers while the world keeps falling apart.

- We, as individuals and as a community, can have an impact.

So, if you're tired of just throwing your hands up and saying, "What can I do about it?"

If you want to stop going with the flow, if you want this cycle to end, if you want to stand up for what's right and for those who can't defend themselves,

If you want to be part of bringing heaven to earth now... What we are about to talk about this is key.

In Revelation, **Jesus offers us a choice. We can either live in Babylon or the KoG.**

So, let's see how we can identify, resist, and undo the power of Babylon.

GOD: John, uses some very vivid imagery to describe this idea...

Rev. 17:1-5 *One of the seven angels who had poured out the seven bowls came over and spoke to me. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you the judgment that is going to come on the great prostitute, who rules over many waters. The kings of the world have committed adultery with her, and the people who belong to this world have been made drunk by the wine of her immorality."*

So the angel took me in the Spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and blasphemies against God were written all over it. The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality. A mysterious name was written on her forehead: "Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World."

By using the name Babylon, John is using language his readers would immediately understand.

Ancient Babylon had conquered and enslaved the ancient Jews

Over time, Babylon became a metaphor for a city filled with arrogance, sin, injustice, oppression of God's people, and idolatry. Systematic sinfulness and opposition to God

It would be like someone saying... "We're living in Nazi Germany!"

- Everyone has a sense of what you're meaning.

So, John uses this idea to describe the culture he is dealing with.

In John's vision, this woman called Babylon the Great, the mother of all prostitutes, is riding the beast we saw last week.

Beast that represented the power and violence of empires and rulers, tools of the dragon, Satan, whose goal is to destroy God's people.

Many people throughout history have tried to assign the image to an actual person.

- Queen Elizabeth I of England or Hilary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, or Oprah.

But John makes it very clear this isn't a person... It's a system

Rev. 17:9a *This calls for a mind with understanding: The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules.*

and 17:18 And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world.

There was only one great city that ruled over the kings of the world that was also built on and around 7 hills... ROME.

John is using this Babylon Woman picture to point out the evils, corruption, and exploitation of the Roman system.

- A system of power and oppression created by the dragon (Satan) through the beasts (leaders)

But this image of Babylon isn't just about ancient empires... as Scholar Scot McKnight wrote:

- *Each century has its own Babylon, each country has its babylons, and each state and city and-- yes, church institutions and churches-- has the potential to release the powers of Babylon.*

Babylon is any system-- political, cultural, economic-- that opposes God's kingdom by luring people into idolatry, corruption, and injustice.

Babylon doesn't just corrupt governments... it corrupts individuals, families, and even churches.

- None of us are immune.

John describes Babylon as a prostitute.

- Not meaning someone trapped in and exploited by the sex trade
- But someone who, by choice, seduces others to get what they want... someone who offers to make your dreams come true for a price... a price you ultimately won't be able to pay.

It seduces people into believing more money, luxury, influence, or control will finally bring fulfillment.

And in John's descriptions we're able to see how this Babylon works its seduction.

4 Characteristics of Babylon:

Wealth & Indulgence (Revelation 17:4)

The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality.

Do you ever wonder why Americans are in so much debt trying to afford things they don't actually need?

Babylon is an empire obsessed with materialism and luxury

- Rome was a perfect example... Just look up what the Roman Elite's feasts were like

But the same thing is seen in the lifestyles of many of today's influencers, movie and sports stars, tech giants... all while people starve or can't afford medical care.

- We see it in corporate excess, consumer culture, and our endless desire for luxury and comfort.

Obsession with Power & Image (Revelation 17:15)

Then the angel said to me, "The waters where the prostitute is ruling represent masses of people of every nation and language."

Have you ever seen someone so obsessed with success/power that they'd sacrifice anything... family, integrity, faith? And wondered what is wrong with them?

Babylon says winning is everything, no matter the cost.

- Roman power was built on conquest... imperialism.
- The history of Rome is the history of war, bloodshed, and terror.
- Babylon destroys anything in its way... anything that doesn't bow and admit it's the best

Babylon promotes idolatry of self.

- Obsessed with projecting the ideal image of—masculinity, femininity, wealth, status, ideology.
- Valuing self-promotion over the humility of Jesus.
- It glorifies celebrity culture, political power, and personal influence as the ultimate achievements.

Pride & Self-Exaltation (Revelation 18:7)

She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so match it now with torment and sorrow. She boasted in her heart, 'I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow, and I have no reason to mourn.'

Why is it so rare for a politician/leader to admit when they are wrong or they screw up?

Babylon is built on the belief that "we are in control—that we don't need God, morality, or anyone else." Leaders claim to be God or to speak for God while spewing hate, violence, and immorality.

They insist on allegiance to themselves and allegiance to images of their power instead of the true God

They boast about how great they are, how much better they are than other rulers and nations

- If someone disagrees, well that person is obviously wrong and probably a bad person, too.

It leads us to trust in governments, economies, and our own strength instead of God's kingdom.

Prioritizes national/political supremacy OVER humility and commitment to Jesus and KoG

Exploitation & Oppression (Revelation 18:11-13)

The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods. She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth; things made of fragrant thyine wood, ivory goods, and objects made of expensive wood; and bronze, iron, and marble. She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, wagons, and bodies—that is, human slaves.

Many of our phones, clothes, and even our chocolate comes from child and exploited labor... but most don't care enough to do anything about it... why?

Babylon is built on using people for profit and pleasure.

It doesn't matter who it hurts as long as we get to enjoy what we want to enjoy

Employing practices that use, abuse, and oppress defenseless human beings, treating them like commodities.

Examples: Human trafficking, sweatshops, and industries that profit from addiction.

- And turning a blind eye to these things so we can enjoy the lifestyle we want to enjoy.

Now, all these descriptions of Babylon isn't just about the evils "out there."

- We are all fully enmeshed in Babylon.

You see it when we:

- Obsess over fighting gun laws more than grieving school shootings.
- Shout about reproductive rights but neglect teaching the value of life and self-sacrificial love.
- Chase status symbols while ignoring the exploited workers behind them.
- Stay silent on truth out of fear of political backlash.
- Drop bombs instead of aid.
- Protect nature but mistreat our neighbors.

Listen... Babylon isn't just on one side of the political spectrum—it's on both.

If you are listening and you're thinking, "Yeah, it's their fault... we have to fight **them** in Babylon... you're missing the whole point here.

No movement, whether it's Christian Nationalism or Liberal Progressivism, can replace what only the KoG can do...

- When we put our trust in ANY human system, we are giving allegiance to Babylon, not Jesus.

JF's are not called to find a middle ground, or to stick our heads in the sand... but to rise above all of it and live for the KoG.

- Not disengaging but... working with God to bring the KoG to earth now.
- Calling out injustices no matter which side is the perpetrator.
- Working to bring peace, mercy, and justice to our neighbors.

JF's cannot give uncritical allegiance to either political side.

- **When any movement demands what belongs to Jesus alone, it becomes Babylon.**

And Babylon will try to get into bed with it...

But... No matter what "side" it takes Babylon will fall... **Rev 18:20-24**

Rejoice over her fate, O heaven

and people of God and apostles and prophets!

For at last God has judged her

for your sakes.

Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a huge millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted,

"Just like this, the great city Babylon

will be thrown down with violence

and will never be found again.

The sound of harps, singers, flutes, and trumpets

will never be heard in you again.

No craftsmen and no trades

will ever be found in you again.

The sound of the mill

will never be heard in you again.

The light of a lamp

will never shine in you again.

The happy voices of brides and grooms

will never be heard in you again.

For your merchants were the greatest in the world,

and you deceived the nations with your sorceries.

In your streets flowed the blood of the prophets and of God's holy people

and the blood of people slaughtered all over the world."

A main message of Revelation is... The dragon, the beasts, and their empire of Babylon will be judged and destroyed.

Justice will be done for those who are exploited, demeaned, persecuted, or even killed by this system of hate and oppression.

True justice and mercy will be done. Maybe not on the timeline we want... but it WILL happen in God's perfect timing.

YOU: So in the meantime, what do WE do?

John issues a call and warning to the people of the world... **Rev. 18:4**

Then I heard another voice calling from heaven,

"Come away from her, my people.

Do not take part in her sins,

or you will be punished with her

He's not saying move somewhere else... no matter where we go, Babylon will already be there.

It's a question of allegiance and loyalty... What do we rely on: the governments, wealth, entertainment, power of the world, or the sacrificial way of the Lamb?

It's a question of our **primary identity**... is our identity in our nation, politics, or culture- Or is it in Jesus alone?

- The true King of Kings who rules through sacrifice, not oppression.

Will we give in to and adopt the values of Babylon, or will we resist and follow the way of the lamb?

Jesus invites everyone to join a different kingdom.

Not built on greed, power, and self-exaltation, but on love, sacrifice, and humility.

Are our lives being shaped by Babylon or by God's Kingdom and the Way of the Lamb?

We need to have our eyes open and learn to smell the stench of Babylon when it tries to seduce us with its putrid perfume.

This means we have to purposely practice resisting... b/c the perfume of Babylon smells like home.

This week: Read through Revelation 17 and 18 and reflect on the Characteristics of Babylon

Pray: Jesus, open my eyes to the ways Babylon has shaped my thinking and desires.

Ask: What is one way I can resist Babylon's influence this week?

- If I've been relying on wealth... How can I practice generosity?
- If I've been relying on some gov or leader to fix things, how can I practice trusting Jesus instead?
- When you make a purchase ask... Am I feeding Babylon's system of greed or following the Lamb?
- When you engage in a discussion/debate, ask... Am I seeking power/pride/image or exemplifying Jesus' humility?
- What influences your thinking more... podcasts/SM or Jesus and his kingdom?
- When you talk/post about politicians, do you treat them like evil things to defeat or people made in the image of God?
- Maybe it's more... maybe it's researching where your products come from or doing something about an injustice that breaks your heart.

No earthly empire lasts forever... only the KoG endures

What we trust in today... money, influence, status, strength will disappear.

WE: Revelation gives us a warning—but also a promise: Babylon will fall, but the Lamb will reign forever.

We are in the middle of a war whether we know it or not.

Our choices matter... our loyalty matters.

Will we build our lives on the seductions of Babylon or the sacrificial way of Jesus?

Babylon wants our loyalty. So does Jesus. One ends in destruction-- the other in eternal life.

Who will you follow?