

World's Lament... Kingdom's Joy Revelation 18:9-24

For the past couple of weeks, we've been exploring the mystery of Babylon the Great, mentioned in Revelation chapters 17 and 18. A couple weeks ago, I listed several potential options of who this entity might be that is being described, and last week Pastor Dave mentioned that John as he was writing possibly had Rome in his mind as being a candidate, but Pastor Dave also emphasized the idea that at the very least, here in these chapters are mentioned a pretty good general description of just the world and the systems of this world who reject Jesus. While this description of Babylon very well could be tied to a specific location seat of power- the bottom line symbolism being inferred through the name Babylon- would be the Babylon society birthed from the tower of Babel- that was built to gather people in order to make a name for themselves, and elevate themselves through their own means apart from God. So in like fashion, during the Tribulation, during the end of days on this earth- and probably even *leading up to* the end of days on this earth -there will very much be a large "tower of Babel" type movement of people, nations, governments, cultures- attempting to prosper and make a name for themselves apart from God. An attempt to advance- to advance civilization, unite the world, better mankind- through mankind's own efforts, while in their hearts rejecting the *Creator* of mankind.

This morning we're going to quickly walk through the end of Revelation 18 that emphasizes the world's lament at seeing the taking away of all the prosperous earthly things that "Babylon" gave access to. And yet Heaven and those belonging to Jesus- the saints, apostles, prophets- are said to rejoice at this taking away. Let's look at it together, Revelation 18 verse 9... **(v9-10)**

So, kings of the earth- in other words- presidents, prime ministers, kings, supreme leaders- whatever we call it in modern-day language, will be in very close relationship with "Babylon," they will be participating in the same forms of evil, they will be prospering from the man-made systems, they will be relishing in the lives they have built, trusting in the power they have gained, confident in the money they have acquired. But suddenly, in an hour- all that will change. Now, we don't know if everything will change in a literal one hour, 60 minute time frame- typically when the Bible mentions the word "hour" it's meant to be understood as a short time period that arrives- like as in "the *hour* has come," the

time has come. Think of it a little bit like one of the old, large, striking clocks that gong a bell loudly each day at midnight. All day the hours are passing, but eventually that midnight hour will arrive, and if you're not anticipating it- that gong will probably alarm you, shock you, and seem sudden- CLANG! The Bible expresses that this is how it will be for those living lives only focused on what this world has to offer- the time of change will arrive suddenly and surprisingly.

Verses 11-13...

Here we have a list of most of the commerce items that were in trade during this period of time- and I don't know about you, but it's a little shocking to read through the list and at the end are mentioned slaves and human lives. That doesn't feel right. But there's a lament expressed that all these sources of income, sources of employment, all the means of making a living- will one day end. The merchants who placed their hope, trust, and life focus on making money through business trade (*without giving any thought to the spiritual, eternal, kingdom economy of God*)- when that business trade that has been relied on for so long, suddenly disappears- it will wreck them. They will weep and mourn. When the one thing that they have built their lives upon is removed, it will be debilitating. When these kingdoms of the world that we now know and trust in, when the hour arrives and they all crumble away- if we have not built our lives focused on the coming everlasting Kingdom of God, we will be thrown into sadness. **Verse 14...**

I've mentioned before how the book of Revelation brings God's story of history full circle. The book of Revelation is how the world will come back full circle and there will once again be a place of paradise in which God can live in close, good relationship with mankind. In the paradise garden of Eden, the very thing that wrecked it all, was a forbidden *fruit*- placed there in the garden to give mankind the opportunity of choice- the choice to trust and obey God, or the choice to trust others and their own desires and instincts. And we've lived with that fruit, we've lived with the effects of that decision ever since. Mankind has ever since been separated from God, and it's not that we can blame just Adam and Eve- no, you and I make the same decision they did over and over, when we choose not to trust God, when we disobey Him, when we give in to the temptations of this world, when we listen to other voices above His. But the time is coming, when that fruit of disobedience that our human instinct craves, will be taken away. The opportunity to indulge in temporary, selfish satisfactions won't

even be possible- because this fallen world will crumble away and only the Kingdom of God and His Kingdom people who have chosen surrender to Jesus will remain. **Verses 15-19...**

The Bible is really emphasizing the distress, the sadness, the depression, the angst of these who will one day anguish over the removal of the earthly things they relied on for so long. But in contrast, **verse 20...**

Heaven is told to rejoice over this removal- the saints, the apostles, the prophets- rejoicing will take place among people who instead love the true King and His coming Kingdom economy, instead of having their affections fully tangled in the passing worldly commerce of the kingdoms of this world. This day will be a day of great joy for those who invested in the Kingdom of Heaven, finally their investment will pay off and great will be their reward. It will be likened to someone who heavily invested in the stock market, and for years it seemed like their stock portfolio only went down and down in value, and others laughed at the “foolishness” of their investment. But one day the hour comes, they wake up one morning to find their portfolio went up 1000% over night, while everyone else’s portfolios, who laughed at them, went to zero. The great reversal day, the great day of the Lord’s reckoning, justice, and reward is coming. **Verses 21-24...**

It’s not that music ends, or that satisfying work ends, or that light ends, or that joy ends- it’s just that those pleasant, good, satisfying sounds and things will no longer take place in the context of a society who does not submit themselves under King Jesus. For the longest time, since the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden- God has allowed in his mercy for even those who do not follow Him to experience at least some level of joy and benefit in this world, but the day is coming, the hour will arrive, in which that will change and there will *no longer* be opportunity for joy, contentment, happiness, fulfillment, meaning anywhere apart from Jesus. And it says that *all* the nations of the world are deceived and fall into this worldly prosperity focus of this Babylon entity.

Verse 24 is perhaps another clue as to where the seat of power will function from for this extremely earthly focused entity known as Babylon, but at the very least, in a very general sense, the sins of the world against Christians will be projected onto this society who rejects Jesus. This verse makes me think of

Matthew 27:25, when Jesus was on trial, mere minutes before His crucifixion, and Pilate the Roman governor was defending Jesus and advocating for his own innocence in the matter, and it says *“And all the people replied, His blood shall be on us and on our children!”* And after this statement, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. These who rejected Jesus would have the guilt of His murder upon themselves and even projected onto their *descendants*; and now here in Revelation, the prophets who lived *before* Jesus, and the saints who lived *after* Jesus- the guilt of *their* murder will be projected onto this Babylon society who rejects Jesus.

This passage serves as a wake up call to the world and even to those of us within the church- a wake up call to reevaluate our life focus and life emphasis. It's so easy for us as Christians to say “yes, I know the Kingdom of Jesus is coming,” but it's another thing to really wake up to the reality of how to apply that understanding in a meaningful way in our day to day lives. And I get that we still have earthly responsibilities while we anticipate the world to come, and I get that there are things we have to deal with that apply only to this passing world, but somehow all those things need to be filtered through a laser sharp focus on the Kingdom of Heaven that is coming. Here in a few moments, I'm going to invite up a guest who experienced a removal of things in his life which could have very well led to bitterness, lament, anger, resentment towards God and towards life, but instead he allowed his experience to give him this laser sharp focus on the Kingdom of Heaven that I'm referring to.

Several months ago we got to hear the beginning of this story, from one of our own here at One Church- Bryan Glover. Bryan shared with us about his comfortable life being completely shaken up as he was diagnosed with a rare but very dangerous form of cancer. We got to hear about his journey of healing and full surrender to Jesus, and during that time with us, he expressed that the end result of all that he experienced, was that his "Yes" was on the table for God- that wherever God would lead- Bryan was ready to follow. And this morning, I want to invite him back up here for the remainder of our service so that he can update you on how God has lead him since he put his yes on the table. Bryan, please come and join me here.

So Bryan, you've shared with me personally this past week, about how and where God has been leading you, but it wasn't like you left our last interview

session at church and God immediately showed you after the service where He was taking you- so, I'd love for you to share a little bit of *how* God revealed to you what your next steps were, and what exactly were, and are now, your next steps.

-Bryan

-Prayer for Bryan

Church, before you go I have three announcements to make...

-If you haven't met them yet, I want to introduce you to Chris and Cindy Aiken, their son Austin Aiken, and their niece Hailey Smith. These four have met together with me recently, and have never been baptized, and they have expressed to me that they want to wholeheartedly follow King Jesus and be identified with Him through baptism. We're going to celebrate them and their commitment to Jesus this weekend in Mills River in the cool river water, but I wanted to recognize them here so that you can celebrate, congratulate, bless, and encourage them. Also, there will be some family members present this weekend at the baptism who have *not* yet chosen to follow Jesus, and it's their hope that the Lord would use this time to speak to these others about their relationship with Jesus Christ. So please be praying for them and for their testimony to their family.

-Secondly, I want to draw your attention to the prayer cards in the holders in front of you. Please use these, even grab one now if you want, and feel free to fill out as little or as much information as you want, so that our prayer team and pastors can be praying for you. There's a blue box to place them in as you exit, a blue box on the back wall to the right, and there's also another blue box on the wall to the right down the hallway as you exit this way.

-Lastly, a major theme that has been emphasized in our study throughout Revelation has been the theme of anticipating the coming Kingdom of Jesus. And I want to give you a little bit of a challenge to end our service with- a Kingdom challenge- something that you can do real quickly before you leave here that should help in encouraging our collective Kingdom mindset and focus on God's work and coming work. Here it is: I want to challenge you to find one

person right now before you go, that you can ask them how you can pray for them, and then I want you to pray for them out loud, right now. It doesn't have to be a long, complicated prayer, but even if you've never prayed out loud in front of someone ever before, I'm challenging you to take a bold step and pray a short prayer for someone else, even if you've never met them before. Raise your hand if you understand and think you can try that. Alright, let's do it, and we'll see you next time church!