

11-13-2016

Message: Flee Babylon: Don't Drink from the Cup of Our Culture's Immorality

Text: Revelation 17:1-6; 18:1-24

Introduction

- A. 2½ months ago on August 26th a magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck central Italy, killing over 300 people and destroying towns such as Amatrice, whose mayor, Sergio Pirozzi, lamented, "Amatrice is not here anymore." (Show slide)
- B. If the friends and family members of the deceased had been informed the day before that a killer quake would destroy Amatrice, what would have been their response? What would have been yours? Wouldn't you have warned everyone to get out of the buildings, get out of town, and insure that those you care about flee to a place of safety?
- C. How much more understandable is it that a loving Heavenly Father should have His Son, Jesus Christ, warn the children of God in the apostle John's day to flee spiritually from the earthquake of His coming judgment on another Italian city code named "Babylon," whose doom is pictured with earthquake imagery at the end of Revelation 16.

Revelation 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; **and there was a great earthquake,** such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. 19 **The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.**

- D. Having seen at the end of chapter 16 the final pouring out of God's wrath resulting in the fall of Babylon the great in the final battle signified as "Har-Magedon," at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, chapters 17-18 zoom in to give further details of the judgment of this Babylon.

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "**Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,** ... ⁵ and on her forehead a name *was* written, a mystery, "**BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**"

- E. The Lord's purpose in zooming in on Babylon's judgment reveals His love for us in warning God's people: "Get out of Babylon!" But who or what is this Babylon?

Revelation 18:4 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;

I. Christ in love for us exposes the identity of Babylon

A. Among first century Christians “Babylon” became a code name for the city of Rome, the capital city and seat of the empire which embodied the kingdom of this world, which lies under the evil one’s power.

1. E.g., Christ’s apostle Peter sends a greeting from the church at Rome to these churches in Asia among others:

1 Peter 5:13 **She who is in Babylon**, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark.

2. The 7 churches in Asia would have naturally understood “Babylon” to be a symbol for Rome, the city famous for being built on 7 hills, the capital city of the empire.

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of **the great harlot who sits on many waters**,² with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of* immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. ...⁹ "Here is the mind which has wisdom. **The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits**, ...¹⁵ And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. ...¹⁸ "The woman whom you saw is **the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth**."

B. Babylon in our day is the governing seat of any empire, kingdom, nation which embodies the kingdom of this world, be it Beijing, Paris, or Washington D.C. Wisdom understands that to embrace, practice, accommodate the values and practices of this world’s culture is to be in Babylon. But what’s so bad about Babylon?

II. Christ in love for us warns us about the allure and coercion of Babylon and the source that fuels it.

A. Wisdom understands that the force behind the alluring, coercing harlot, Rome, who sits on the beast, the empire, is Satan himself.

1. The devil is the dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns.

Revelation 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, **a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns**, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. ...⁹ And **the great dragon** was thrown down, **the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan**, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

2. The beast with 7 heads and 10 horns, taking on the image of the devil, receiving its power from the devil, is at one level the empire of Rome that supercedes the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece. At another level, the Roman Empire embodies the kingdom of this world, presently embodied by all the empires and kingdoms of this world under the power of the evil one.

Revelation 13:1 And **the dragon** stood on the sand of the seashore. Then **I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads**, and on his horns *were* ten diadems, and on his heads *were* blasphemous names.² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like *those* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. **And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.**

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**

3. The woman who sits on the beast is the capitol city of the empire, ruling over the peoples of the world.

Revelation 17:15 And he said to me, "**The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples** and multitudes and nations and tongues. ...¹⁸ "**The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.**"

- B. This Babylon in John's day and in our own day is both alluring, attractive to the people of the world, as well as coercive, intimidating people into compliance with her immorality and agendas.

Revelation 17:1 .. the great harlot who sits on many waters,² with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of* immorality, and **those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.** ...⁴ **The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,**⁵ and on her forehead a name *was* written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."⁶ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

1. She is deceptive in that she appears attractive. She holds what looks like a gold cup of blessing, which is actually filled with her immorality.

Revelation 18:3 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. ... **all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.**

- a. Unfortunately, segments of the church, in an attempt to reach the culture, are

mimicking the culture. E.g., blogger Jen Hatmaker approving of monogamous homosexual relationships.

Revelation 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and **he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.**

- b. Governments codify behavior, for better or worse. The law not only enforces behavior; the law is a teacher. Many people draw conclusions of what is right and wrong from what is legal and illegal.
2. In John's day full economic and social participation in city life involved attendance at idolatrous feasts and pagan religious celebrations. Participation in trade guilds required the offering of incense on the altar to Caesar as a god.

Revelation 13:17 and *he provides* that **no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark,** *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name.

III. Christ in love for us commands us to flee Babylon

Revelation 18:4 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.

A. Why flee? Wisdom flees Babylon, for God will remember her sins, resulting in her judgment.

1. When God remembers, God reacts to what He recalls. When God remembers sin, He punishes the sinner.

Hosea 9:9 They have gone deep in depravity as in the days of Gibeah; **He will remember their iniquity, He will punish their sins.**

Revelation 16:19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. **Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.**

2. Remaining spiritually in Babylon is madness, as it was madness to remain physically in 539 BC when Cyrus and his Persian army overran the city.

Jeremiah 51:6 **Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment,** for this is the LORD'S time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.

Revelation 18:6 "**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.'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.**

3. If you don't flee Babylon now, to where will you flee for safety when your punishment comes from the returning Lord? Flee to the one place where your sins are remembered no more. Flee to Christ and abide in Him through faith. When God does not remember sin, He does not act to punish, but forgives sin.

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ... 34 ..."for **I will forgive their iniquity,** and **their sin I will remember no more.**"

- B. How do we flee Babylon? How do we flee God's coming wrath on her at Christ's return? Flee the culture of Babylon through a faith in Christ that ...

1. brings for fruits of repentance.

Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to **flee from the wrath to come?**
8 "Therefore **bear fruit in keeping with repentance;**

2. flees immorality and youthful lusts

1 Corinthians 6:18 **Flee immorality.** Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

2 Timothy 2:22 Now **flee from youthful lusts** and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

3. flees idolatry

1 Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry.**

4. flees from the voice of strangers and false teachers and follow the voice of Christ.

John 10:5 "A stranger they simply will not follow, **but will flee from him,** because they do not know the voice of strangers."

5. flees from the love of money and material comforts

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11

But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Conclusion

- A. If we loved our children and knew the building they were in was about to fall, we would warn them in the most graphic terms to flee the building for safety.
- B. How much more does God love His children than we earthly parents love ours.
- C. So behold the love of God in the visions of Babylon's collapse. Be warned by them; be made wise by them, and flee to Christ for safety.