

BABYLON IS FALLEN

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon^[f] is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those^[g] who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,^[h] “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

So in our last message through the survey of Revelation we dealt with what I consider to be one of the primary problems people have when reading or studying this book. In Revelation 1:3 we read the following words:

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near.

The problem is that many people forget that this book is meant to be a blessing to the reader and hearer of it. Sadly, most people read this book and come away, not blessed but confused or afraid. While it is true there are parts in this book that are frightening, these parts are meant to be overshadowed by the primary theme of the Book which is that Christ has conquered all of His enemies,

In our last message we saw a great angel flying in the heavens carrying the message of the everlasting gospel. The everlasting gospel is good news for all man. Man is without hope and without God in the World, but now Christ has overcome all of His enemies and purchased our salvation with his precious blood, and He has raised us up into heavenly places with Him. The Church of Jesus Christ now stands along side of Him and rules from Mt. Zion.

Whenever I hear someone ranting and raving about how afraid they are about this book, it becomes clear to me that they are the type of person who misses the forest because of the trees.

But about those trees... Some of them can be rather discouraging. Today we get to look at some of the trees. Today's text begins with another angel, this angel is crying out,:

Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Interesting wording of this text. Note the repeated references to the fallen state of Babylon. One of the things I mentioned in our last service was the liturgical nature of this Book. These references are meant to be recited in a liturgical type setting. The double reference is there for the purposes of emphasis. This great city, this Babylon is fallen.

Well, Babylon, as we will see becomes an important theme in the Book of Revelation. But this is the first appearance of this city in the book. There has been quite a lot of speculation as to who or what is being talked about when Revelation speaks of Babylon. Babylon was an ancient city that is very often in the Scripture presented as one of the chief enemies of Israel and/or the people of God. The very first mention of Babylon in the Bible is all the way back in Genesis 10.

⁸ Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." ¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

In the next chapter it begins by telling us:

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. ² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

The narrative continues by telling us the whole account of the tower of Babel. We know that after these events the people of the world were scattered and languages were confused, but we are just beginning to deal with this great city. Throughout the Old Testament Babylon always seemed to find herself as the chief enemy of Israel. Many of the Old Testament prophets speak of Babylon and condemn her for her wickedness and her pride. And the Israelites regarded Babylon as a "wicked empire."

Some of the possible candidates for who Babylon might be, at least that I have heard are, not surprisingly, Babylon, Rome, the Roman Catholic Church, and of course the United States of America. Some less specific authors have identified Babylon as a "*false system of worship*" that permeates all of the differing denominations. Well, I can guarantee that no-one reading this letter in the first century was thinking of America, and they were certainly not picturing the Roman Catholic Church. I do like to think though that they all had an idea of who John was talking about.

We do have evidence taken from elsewhere in the Bible that very strongly indicated where Babylon is? I believe very strongly that the Babylon that is spoken of as being "fallen" in this

passage is not other city than Jerusalem itself. There are some that I have spoke to about this who act quite shocked that I could call the "holy city" Babylon, but the Bible does not hesitate from casting this judgment.

The Apostle Peter in his first Epistle describes the local church that he is writing from as "she who is in Babylon." if we follow the Biblical evidence this letter was written from where Peter lived and ministered. He also sends greetings in this letter from Mark and Silvanus both of whom lived in Jerusalem. Peter called Jerusalem Babylon, and we will see as we look further at the details of this prophecy that when speaking of Babylon, John is speaking of Jerusalem. The Holy City, the City of David is being described as the wicked city Babylon. In Chapter 11 she is called both Egypt and Sodom, and now John refers to her as Babylon. This city which is such an integral part of much of the Old Testament is now described as a duplicate of the wicked and proud Babylon. Babylon the ancient persecutor of the people of God is now the name given to Jerusalem. We will see more details about prophetic "Babylon" in the coming weeks, but the point of today's passage is that this great angel who follows the angel proclaiming the "everlasting gospel," pronounces that Babylon is fallen.

Babylon will later be described as a harlot city, that causes all the nations to drink of her fornication. When we recall the original purpose of the calling of Israel this becomes even more striking. In Exodus 19 when the children of Israel are standing before the mountain of the Lord at Sinai, he tells them their purpose:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

They were to be a nation of priests set apart to show the other nations of the world the way to reconciliation with God, but instead they cause the nations to participate in fornication, and when God's saints do come near they are persecuted and killed by the ones who are suppose to know better.

In Matthew 23 Jesus weeps over the City of Jerusalem because her end is near. He then details her coming destruction in the 24th chapter. Here we have this angel heralding this destruction.

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

A third angel follows the first two, this angel proclaims the earlier judgments that are pronounced on the worshipers of the beast. This is following the proclamation that Babylon is fallen. This angel issues a warning against the worship of the beast. Truthfully this is a very severe warning. As we have discussed in earlier messages the beast is a composite of all of the nations of the world that have attempted to thwart the advance of the Kingdom of God. At this time, the time of the writing of this book, the beast's most prominent showing is in the Roman Empire. Recall the Jewish authorities' statement that "We have no king but Caesar." They have rejected rule by God in favor of rule by man.

It is important to understand that the beast as presented in Daniel and continuing here in Revelation is presented as Pagan empires. It is not a coincidence that the beast as presented primarily in the Scriptures is presented as a nation or an empire that exalts itself against God's plan of salvation. The point is that when people look to empires, nations, or the state for their deliverance or for their salvation, this is idolatry.

All pagan empires in the past, and even today, attempt to replace Biblical Salvation with humanistic salvation, and this tends to manifest itself in worship of the state. I know this is not a popular idea in today's society, but the place people go today when they have a problem is rarely the font of grace, instead they go to the state. They may complain about it when they go, but none the less this is where people in our nation and all pagan nations in the past have gone for security. John is warning here that those who worship the beast, those who rely on the beast for their salvation, will partake of the cup of God's wrath and it is poured out in full strength mixed with His indignation.

The Lord has urged His people to trust Him, and yet often they are entranced by a desire to be like other nations. Our trust is always to be found in God's Kingdom. Psalms 20 starting in verse 6 says:

Now I know that Jehovah saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of Jehovah our God. They have bowed down and fallen, But we have risen and stand upright. Save, Jehovah, May the King answer us when we call.

It is interesting that in this Psalm, not only does the Lord draw a distinction between the two groups of people and where they place their trust, He also shows the end result. They have bowed down and fallen, and we are risen and stand upright. Remember, had their salvation in their midst, they rejected Him for Roman protection.

The week before crucifying the Lord of Glory the people of Israel cried out Hosanna, which means "Save now," But when given the choice as to where their salvation would come from, they looked to Caesar instead of Christ.

Worship is defined in the dictionary as: *reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage or to any object regarded as sacred.* Why do people worship? In the Book of Exodus, Israel while waiting for Moses on Mt. Sinai built and worshipped a Golden Calf.

Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

They began to look to constructs of their own hand and credit their salvation to what they had formed. Very much like Israel of old many today misplace their devotion, this is not a minor thing. This is the very idolatry that brings God's wrath. Over and over through the Scripture people are warned about where it is they place their trust, and here this angel is issuing a repeated warning, those who worship the beast and his image receive the full wrath of God poured out upon them. This warning about idolatry is very serious and the proof of this is indicated by the next verses which are very troubling to a lot of people. Those who place their trust in the beast, of them it says the following:

He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Fire and brimstone brings us back to one of the most fearful and awesome passages in the Old Testament, the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19 describes the event of this passage using the words, "The smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace." We have all heard countless discussion about the fire and brimstone of hell. There is even a name for certain type of preacher, they are called "Hell fire and brimstone preachers." These are preachers, supposedly who spend more time talking about God's judgment than they do his grace. However, truthfully I think these days if a preacher spends 99% of his time talking about grace and mercy and manages to throw a mention of hell into his message he will be called a "hell fire and brimstone preacher." God's judgment is not a popular subject and it is one that makes people feel very uncomfortable, but I want to point something out to those of us who cannot imagine Jesus being involved in judging.

The Scripture tells is in this passage that all of those who worship the beast will be "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." This does very interesting things to the idea that "a God of love," would never punish individuals in such a way. Sadly, this is a symptom of the previously mentioned idolatry. Rather than believe what God's Word says, they again lean to their own understanding and create a God in their image who is all candy, flowers, and happy things. The text is absolutely clear, the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. and it does so in the very presence of the lamb.

We must never forget that the same God who saves His people. is the same God who brings absolute justice to all those who reject Him.

The following verses speak about the patience of the Saints:

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those^[g] who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,^[h] "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

The saints are contrasted with the ones who worship the Beast. The saints place their trust in the lamb, they keep the commandments of God and they have the faith of Christ Jesus. Where the followers of the differing idolatries are given no rest those who wait patiently on the Lord, and keep His commandments receive rest from their labors and their works follow them. This brings us a very interesting thing. Trusting in the Lord is one of those simple things that Christians must do, but though doing that seems simple, it also means not placing our trust in other things.

And of course the saints devotion is described using the word patience. This means that they trust the Lord in all things and they are not overly concerned by the apparent short term successes of evil men. They are not sent into a frenzy when temporal events seem out of control, and the ultimate reason for this is because they see things with eyes that are devoted to the Lord. They know that the Lord is in charge.

This is the patience of the Saints. The NASB renders this verse, This is the perseverance of the Saints. Patience and perseverance are meant to be the same thing here. They are patient because they know their live does not belong to them it is the Lord's. There is nothing the enemy, the beast, or any other created thing can do to remove them from God's perfect plan. I have said this before, and I am sure I will say it again, if your trust is in princes, politics, American monetary policy, the military, etc. In broad, if it is anything apart from Christ Jesus, you will live a life of anxiety and fear. You will, as the Scripture says have no rest day or night, Because everyone of these things, when they fail to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, they are following after the beast. The Word says that the patience or the perseverance of the Saints, belongs to those who fear the Lord by keeping His commandments. This includes the commandment to trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

The degree of this trust is found in the last verse.

'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

It is only these who receive the promised rest. Our lives belong to the Lord, and when we trust in Him, we will receive blessing. Where our trust is, is a great indication of where our God is.

As I have done over and over in these messages I will again quote what I consider the key passage in Revelation.

"They overcome Him (the dragon), by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their own lives unto the death,"

When we find ourselves anxious, when we find ourselves afraid, the question we need to ask ourselves is, "Where have I placed my trust?" Psalm 2, a Psalm that is referenced quite a few times in the Book of Revelation begins, with some questions.

Why do the heathen nations rage? Why do they plot and scheme against Jehovah and against His anointed one?

We know that this is the way of sinful man. They rage against the Lord, They plot and scheme to find salvation or victory in anyway but the only way in which man can be saved. The Lord in heaven laughs and he holds them in derision. Clearly He is not afraid. If our trust is in Him neither will we be afraid. As we will see, the harvest is very plentiful. Our view of the world is largely shaped by where our trust is located. Are we those who follow the lamb? Can we laugh at the schemes of the wicked one, or do we fear him? Jesus Christ, as this passage tells us is the only heir. If we desire the rest that comes in Christ Jesus all have to do is to place our full trust in Him. Any other area that your place your trust is a false hope. My prayer is that we will look to the lamb upon Mt. Zion, and not be distracted by vanity and idolatry.