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(Revelation 18:1-24)

Intro. When I was in high school, I was a basketball player. Basketball players in Indiana are treated like demi-gods. Time does not permit me to tell you all the things I got away with because I was a basketball player, but suffice it to say I got out of multiple tickets when the police officer recognized my name. Add to that an AP Government class I took my senior year & the teacher told us she would always be 15 minutes late & didn’t care if we were on time & I never exerted myself to get to class on time. I got away with tickets & tardiness because of my status & because of a lazy teacher—sometimes we think just because we don’t pay for our sins, we won’t ever have to pay for them, but nothing could be further from the truth. As we conclude our series today on “God’s Judgment on the World” from Revelation 17-18, we look at chapter 18 & God’s judgment on “Governments & Economies.”

Theme: God’s judgment

Background: Jesus Christ gave John the Apostle this Revelation as a series of visions primarily concerning the end times.

- 1 out of every 10 verses in Revelation concerns Babylon with the entirety of chapters 17 & 18 devoted to it. Other than Jerusalem, Babylon is the most mentioned city in the Bible with some 300 references
- As I’ve mentioned before, scholars cannot agree about this future Babylon—some believe it is a renewed Roman Empire, some think it is the Roman Catholic Church, others see it as Jerusalem & some think it is a rebuilt Babylon & some aren’t sure what to think, preferring to see it as a personification of all that is evil in the world
- As John receives this vision (“after these things,” v. 1—9x in Revelation), he hears from 4 voices—one of condemnation (1-3), separation (4-8), lamentation (9-19) & celebration (20-24)—since chapter 19 continues the celebration of the saints, chapter 18 connects the prostitute & false religion of chapter 17 & describes her downfall so that God’s people are avenged & can offer songs of celebration (19:1-8)
- Chapter 17 primarily deals with the religious & political aspects of Babylon & chapter 18 deals with the commercial aspects

Areas of Explanation & Application:

1. The fall of false religion will affect nations & economies (18:2-3, 9-24)—so stand firm in the Lord

- “fallen, fallen” (18:2)—when used of saints in Revelation, it refers to worship, but with unbelievers, it refers to perishing (cf. 14:8)
- The dwelling place of demons & unclean birds is similar to the fall of Babylon described in Isaiah 13:21-22—evil spirits live in deserted places in the Gospels & the destroyed city is a haunt, which references a prison or tower used to incarcerate evil

Illus: This is like where the Necromancer lived in Dol Guldur in *The Hobbit*, not too different from what we call haunted houses today—unclean birds like vultures & buzzards will gorge themselves on the carcasses of those who have perished in mass destruction (see also 19:17-21)

- The long list of goods & cargo associated with Babylon marks the city as an economic juggernaut (Hitchcock, 368)—few items listed are necessities; most are luxuries
 - Business & government are so intertwined that what affects one affects the other (Wiersbe, 1075)
 - Zechariah also saw this fall & its effect on the economy (Zechariah 5:5-11)
- #### 2. God calls His people to separate from the world & the coming judgment (18:4; cf. 18:20, 24)—so be separate from the world
- Isaiah & Jeremiah exhorted the Jewish exiles to leave Babylon & return to their own land (Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 51:6, 45)—Paul instructs the Corinthian church to come out of their pagan background (2 Corinthians 6:17)

- Jesus calls us to be “in” the world but not “of” the world—He calls us out to avoid pollution & to avoid the plagues He will send on the world
 - John refers to the “saints” 13x in Revelation—sometimes in heaven & sometimes in the world—part of my understanding of believers going through the Great Tribulation is because that’s what we find in Revelation—but just because you have to go through it doesn’t mean you have to be like the world, for we are called to be separate from it
- 3. The judgment will be quick (18:5-8, 10, 17, 19)—so don’t delay in surrendering to the Lord**
- God does not remember the sins of His people (He doesn’t hold it against them), but He remembers every single sin of unbelievers
 - The past tense used for the future conveys not only expectation of the coming judgment but certainty of it
 - Similar judgments are spoken by the prophets concerning Babylon (Isaiah 13; Jeremiah 50-51)
 - Just as ancient Babylon tried to reach the heavens by their pride & what they could build, future Babylon will reach heaven by their sins piled high & stuck together (18:5)
 - This judgment will be irrevocable (18:11, 14, 21-23)
 - The kings & merchants “stand far off” so they aren’t caught up in the destruction
- 4. The judgment will bring tremendous sorrow (18:8-11, 15, 18-19)—so don’t put your trust in the things of this world** (avoid the lure of the things of this world)
- Ezekiel 27-28 describes the great lament over the fall of Tyre in similar terms
 - Verses 9-20 are a funeral dirge for Babylon’s fall—what mankind has spent working to build up over a lifetime will be destroyed in one hour (for descriptions of each of the products, see Kistemaker, 494-496)

Illus: Here is the picture: “world economies in ruins, riots & robberies a plague, disease & death rampant, & leaders filled with fear” (Kistemaker, 493)

Illus: Kings of the earth & business tycoons will get in on the world economy, thinking they had gotten in on an opportunity of a lifetime, but “those who rest in the lap of Babylon’s luxury will suddenly realize that the tables have been turned. Like the Nazis in Berlin on the eve of the Allied victory, the reality of the Antichrist’s defeat will be obvious as their satanic Reich disintegrates before their eyes” (Swindoll)

- When the desire for money fills your life, it becomes a false god & will only lead to sorrow in the end
- 5. Outside of the Lord there will be no hope (18:21-24)—so hope in the Lord**
- “will be found/heard/shine no more”—6x to underscore hopelessness
 - All the power & glory of this world & the riches it offers will disappear like a rock beneath the waves—all that people had lived for with great luxury & power will be like a millstone around their necks, dragging them to the bottom of the sea

Conc. Halloween night of 1992, 9 of us juniors from the varsity basketball team left my house to ride around town. The star player & me told them we didn’t want to go & they assured us we would only spy things out & then we would get dropped off. That wasn’t exactly true—they began stealing pumpkins & an American flag & when the driver ran a stop light in front of an undercover cop, we were in trouble. We raced through the streets of Vincennes only to get trapped right in front of the athletic director’s house. He came out & chewed us out & if we would have had eggs on us, we would have been in trouble, because there were reports of windows broken due to eggs. We got off & I went straight to my parents so they could hear from me & then we went to our coach so he could hear from us. You see, I thought I had a good alibi, because they promised me they wouldn’t get into any trouble, but I should have separated from them that night. One day judgment will come & you cannot say “I didn’t know any better,” or “I thought what others were telling me was true.” The only truth that will matter is God’s truth & whether you surrendered to Him or not. Trust in Jesus without delay.