

The Fall of Babylon City

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 May 2024

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. My name is Sean, for those of you who don't know me, and it's my joy to preach God's word to you this morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 18.

If you don't have a Bible, if you raise your hand, we'll give you a copy that you can use. And you can keep that, actually. Revelation chapter 18.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Father, we are poor, so we come to you who are rich.

Father, grace us with your heavenly generosity, your mercy.

We are naked, so we come to you for raiment, to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Impress upon us our desperate need for you and expose the ways in which we have consorted with Babylon, the sinful city of man.

[1 : 41] And consecrate us, sanctify us this morning to yourself and to your son, our bridegroom, Jesus Christ, the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Address us now from your word, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. We stand to honor God and his words, if you please, if you're able, stand, and I will read from Revelation chapter 18.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.

And he called out with a mighty voice, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.

[3 : 04] Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins. Lest you share in her plagues, for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds. Mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed, as she glorified herself and lived in luxury.

So give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, I sit as a queen, I am the widow, and mourning I shall never see.

For this reason, her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire, for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off in fear of her torment and say, Alas, alas, you great city, you mighty city, Babylon, for in a single hour your judgment has come.

[4 : 23] And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore. Cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is human souls.

The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again. The merchants of these wares who gained wealth from her will stand far off in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud.

Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels and with pearls, for in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke were burning, what city was like the great city?

And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth, for in a single hour she has been laid waste.

[5 : 56] Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her. Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, so will Babylon, the great city be thrown down with violence and will be found no more.

And the sound of harpists and musicians of flute players and trumpeters will be heard in you no more. And a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more.

And the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more. And the light of a lamp will shine in you no more. And the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more.

For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Many of you have heard this parable before.

[7 : 09] I heard it, I think, from David Foster Wallace first. Two fish are swimming in the ocean, and then two young fish are swimming in the ocean.

And then an old, more seasoned fish swims right by them, and then asks them, morning boys, how's the water? And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over to the other and says, what in the world is water?

It's a parable that teaches us that sometimes the most obvious and pervasive and important realities are the hardest for us to see and talk about.

When you're so immersed in something every single day of your life, it becomes hardly noticeable. Such is the case with money. In seminary, pastors in training are warned about various heresies and erroneous theological trends, but rarely are they warned against the dangers of wealth because we're all entangled in it.

In discipleship groups, in churches, and in accountability groups, sins like lust are often confessed, but finding one's identity and security in money and what it could buy is rarely confessed.

[8 : 38] Every day, we're clicking the buy button, swiping the credit card and depositing our checks and Venmoing money, but so many of us spend very little time reflecting critically about money and the way we view it and the way we relate to it.

The word of God, thankfully, does not share our blind spot. Jesus taught that it's easier for a camel with its enormous hump to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

And the fall of Babylon that we see here in Revelation 18 bears out that reality. All those people who committed sexual morality with Babylon, the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, the shipmen, the seafarers of the earth, fall along with Babylon, come to judgment.

Babylon, the great prostitute, as I mentioned last week, represents the city of man, the center of the sinful world's cultural influence and economic power. And in this chapter, John uses the Old Testament language of divine judgment on wicked cities like Sodom and Gomorrah and Nineveh and Edom and Jerusalem and most pertinently, Babylon and Tyre to describe, it uses the language of the judgments of those cities in the Old Testament to describe the end-time destruction of Babylon.

And God's main exhortation for us in this chapter is found in verses 4 and 5. Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues, for her sins are heaped high as heaven and God has remembered her iniquities.

[10 : 21] The angel's warning gives us two reasons why we should come out. Actually, that voice, saying that in verse 4 and 5 may be the voice of Christ, it's not identified directly and when he's not identified usually in Revelation it's the voice of Christ.

It says, come out of the self-glorying luxury of Babylon. The first reason why we should come out of Babylon is lest we take part in her sins and the second reason why we should come out is lest we share in her plagues.

The first reason is so that we might avoid the defilement of sin and the second is so that we might avoid the destruction on account of that sin. So I'm going to talk about those two things in turn. It says in verses 1 and 2, an angel from heaven having great authority whose glory illuminates the earth calls out with a mighty voice and whenever an angel cries out with a loud voice in the book of Revelation or a mighty voice like this, there's an authoritative pronouncement that follows.

This angel does not speak timidly or quietly or uncertainly rather with great authority and a mighty voice because he has the authority of the king of kings behind him.

[11 : 30] And that means the judgment that's announced here about Babylon is inevitable. It's certain to come. And that certainty is expressed in the past tense of the announcements that it uses.

It says, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a dwelling place for demons. This is interesting because we know later from verse 21 that Babylon has not yet fallen.

It doesn't fall until the end. And yet here, so there it says, so will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence. That hasn't happened yet. And yet, when the angel pronounces the judgment of Babylon, uses the perfect tense, the past tense, as if it has already happened, to indicate the fact that its fulfillment is certain, as good as done.

That's what the Hebrew grammarians call the prophetic perfect. Just as ancient Babylon and ancient Tyre and Sodom and Gomorrah fell, this chapter uses that same language to say that this city of man is doomed to fall.

And verse 2 continues, she has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

[12 : 48] This judgment continues the contrast between Babylon the harlot and New Jerusalem, which is the bride of the lamb, as I began to talk about last week. In chapter 21, verse 3, the bride of the lamb, which is the people of God, the church of Christ, become the dwelling place of God himself.

But here in chapter 18, verse 2, Babylon the harlot becomes a dwelling place for demons. That's the ultimate destiny of the city of man in its hubris and luxury.

Those who feel at home in this sinful world will soon become a dwelling place for demons. But Christians who live as exiles and aliens in this sinful world will soon become the dwelling place of God.

And when it is judged, Babylon will be a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

This judgment echoes the judgment of ancient Babylon prophesied of in Jeremiah 51, 37, which says, Babylon shall become a heap of Romans, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing without inhabitant.

[13 : 59] The fact that Babylon in this picture is overrun by these wild beasts and demons is a sign that Babylon will be desolate and abandoned. It will have no inhabitants.

The repetition of the word unclean exposes the skeleton that's in Babylon's closet. In Revelation 17, 4, when the Babylon, the prostitute, was described as this beautiful, seductive woman arrayed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls.

However, she was holding in her golden chalice inside it abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And that word impurity is the exact same word as a noun form of the word unclean that's used here in chapter 18.

So in her beautiful and luxurious golden chalice, Babylon hid the uncleanness of her sins, of her sexual immorality and idolatry. And now that uncleanness is exposed once and for all in God's judgment of Babylon, her punishment fits the crime.

She filled the world with her uncleanness and now she will be filled with all kinds of unclean spirits and beasts. Verse 3 confirms this, this last clause explicitly hones in on the economic power by which Babylon seduces kings and merchants and seafarers.

[15 : 36] Babylon's sexual immorality is a metaphor for her idolatrous economic activity. Similar to how the city of Tyre is described in Isaiah 23, 17 as prostituting herself with kingdoms.

Chapter 18 is structured like a sandwich. The two pieces of bread at the beginning and the end are the angelic pronouncements of Babylon's judgment verses 1 to 8 and verses 21 to 24.

And in between those two sections at the heart in the middle where the meat would be are three dirges or elegies, funeral songs sung by three different classes of people, the kings of the earth, the merchants, and the seafarers, all mourning the loss of Babylon because they had grown rich by their immorality and idolatry with Babylon.

And this structure makes the heart very center of the passage the funeral song of the merchants in verses 11 to 17. In verse 16, the merchants who had been enriched by their dealings with Babylon mourn her fall saying, Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls.

This is largely a repetition of the description of the Babylon prostitute we saw in chapter 17, verse 4 last week. And interestingly, these exact items, fine linen, purple and scarlet cloth, gold, jewels, and pearls are all listed in verse 12 where it lists the cargo that Babylon trafficked in and traded in order to enrich itself.

[17:09] As I mentioned before, in the first century during John's time of writing, Babylon was Rome. Rome was the primary expression of this city of man, Babylon. Babylon. And all the items listed in 12 and 13 are items that Rome trafficked in.

He traded those things. You can see that in the historical writings from the time. And these trade items of Rome that made the city rich are like the fine clothes and jewelry that a prostitute accumulates as payment from her clients, from her sexual morality.

I wrote out kind of detailed descriptions of what all these are like in comparison to what it's like in our modern day, but unfortunately I don't have time to go into that because of time constraints.

I will just mention one maybe representative example of just the luxury that Babylon indulged themselves in, and that's of pearls.

Cleopatra was queen of Egypt, which was under Roman rule at the time, and then she hosted the Sumptuous Party, and she at one point boasted to her guest that she was going to consume what would be worth of \$527,000 worth of food and drink.

[18:37] And the guest asked her, well, how in the world are you going to consume that much? And then she promptly asked her servant to bring a cup of vinegar in, and then she removes one of the most expensive pearls known to man at the time from her ears, and puts it in the vinegar so that it dissolves.

Apparently pearls dissolve in vinegar, I didn't know that, and then she drinks it just to show, to flaunt her wealth and show what kind of luxury she lived in.

It's not dissimilar from musical artist Post Malone, who I read in the New York Times has, how much?

\$1.6 million worth of teeth done. How many teeth does he have? And the reason why it's \$1.6 million is because he has 18 porcelain veneers, 8 platinum crowns, and 2 6-carat diamonds to replace his upper canines.

It's the kind of luxury some people in Babylon live in. Now, you may have already noticed that these categories of trade items that I read are each in descending order of value.

[19:59] It first lists all the precious metals and stones and jewels in descending order of value, starting with gold. And then it lists clothing items in descending order of value.

And then it lists construction and craft materials in descending order of value. And then he lists incense and perfumes in descending order of value. And then he lists food items in descending order of value.

And then finally, it lists livestock, labor in descending order of value. And the fact that slaves, that is human souls, are mentioned at the very end, after cattle and sheep, horses and chariots is an indictment of Rome and Babylon's value system.

It's a culture that values animals more than humans, where humans are treated like animals. And the fact that slaves are described expressly as human souls is a scathing critique of Babylon's contempt for human life.

How do you deal in the trade of humans for your merchandise? But all this busy trading will come crashing down when God judges Babylon.

[21:11] Verse 14 says, The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again. The word delicacies conveys Babylon's indulgence in luxury.

The word splendors conveys Babylon's extravagant display of wealth. And in what ways, I want to ask, are we complicit in this self-glowing luxury of Babylon?

Just this past week, I saw in the news, in the headlines, the vice president and head of communications at Baidu, which is the Chinese equivalent of Google, came under fire because of her unapologetic promotion of her work-till-you-drop mindset and her cutthroat management style on her social media accounts.

I don't know if some of you guys saw that. She posted a series of short videos where she excoriates an employee for refusing to go on a 50-day business trip during the COVID pandemic.

And then she says, quote, Why should I take my employees' family into consideration? I'm not her mother-in-law. I'm 10 years, 20 years older than you. I didn't feel bitter about it or tired, even though I have two children.

[22 : 21] Who are you to tell me that your husband can't stand it? In another clip, she talks almost both about how she worked so hard that one time she forgot her older son's birthday and what grade her younger son is in.

And then she insists that she has no regrets because she, quote, chose to become a career woman. In another video, she says, If you work in public relations, don't expect weekends off. Keep your phone on 24 hours a day, always ready to respond. This is what many executives think throughout the world. She just has the gall to be in your face about it.

And she was foolish enough to post it on social media, so I think she got fired eventually because it was a public relations disaster. Similarly, in 2019, Alibaba co-founder of Jack Ma endorsed the 996 trend, meaning working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

six days a week. That's a 72-hour work week, which is actually not uncommon here in Cambridge. Don't think that this happens only in China.

[23 : 30] In 2021, a presentation entitled Working Conditions Survey by first-year analysts at Goldman Sachs became public. And the answer to the question, How many hours have you worked this week?

was 105 hours. And then the question, How many hours have you worked per week on average? was 98 hours. In New York Times article, David Brooks comments, quote, I've heard countless presidential candidates say they are running on behalf of their families for their future, to care for them, even though their entire lives have been spent on the campaign trail away from their families. In what ways are we complicit with the self-glorifying luxury of Babylon? In what ways do we perform a kind of child sacrifice at the altar of success and prestige and wealth?

Jonathan Weber writes in The Atlantic in an article entitled Greed, Bankruptcy, and the Super Rich that exorbitant executive salaries, emphasis on luxury goods, a cavalier attitude toward enormous amounts of debt, and risky, greedy deals that enrich the dealmakers at the expense of the common worker are the economic zeitgeist of our age.

The spirit of the times. In what ways are we in our work, in the way we manage our employees, in the way we do our work, complicit with the self-glorifying luxury of Babylon?

[25 : 14] Sure, we might not make as much money as Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, but haven't we also profited from the wealth of Babylon? What do you think the global median income is?

Americans were asked that question in a survey in 2018, and the average guess was \$20,000, which is not that high by our standards, but the actual number then was \$2,100 a year.

Some of you make more than that in one week. The global median income is now a little higher. It's still shockingly low compared to what we make here.

The Washington Post article entitled, Most Americans Vastly Underestimate How Rich They Are Compared With The Rest of the World claims that, even the developed world's poor and middle classes are, by global standards, extraordinarily rich.

After adjusting for cost of living differences, a typical American still earns an income that is 10 times the income received by the typical person in the world. After adjusting for cost of living differences.

[26 : 25] most of us live in an embarrassment of riches. And greed is a very insidious thing if you think about it. It can creep in and take us captive without our noticing because we don't usually compare ourselves with the rest of the world, do we?

We compare ourselves to the people around us. And we're in the city of Cambridge, a very wealthy city. There's already a self-selected group of people who can afford to live here living around us.

And so when we compare ourselves to them, oh, I don't live lavishly like that person. Oh, I don't take vacations like that person. So we think, oh yeah, I live pretty modestly. That's what we think. I think that's why, according to a survey from Gallup, 73% of people in the U.S. consider themselves to be part of the middle working class while only 2% think of themselves as belonging to the upper class.

because they're all doing this peer comparison. Oh, I must be in the middle class. I will venture to guess that many of us have standards of living that are way higher than they need to be and or used to be.

[27 : 45] When I was a college student, I was challenged by a pastor to not let my standard of living increase with my income but to maintain a modest lifestyle so that I can be more generous with people.

I have not been entirely successful in that endeavor. What kind of difference would we make in the world if we all strive to live like that?

In what ways are we complicit with the self-lowering luxury of Babylon? Do you know that the gambling industry in the U.S., including brick-and-mortar casinos and online casinos and sports betting generates \$175.4 billion a year in revenue?

That's more than the revenue generated by the entire recorded music industry and the entire domestic box office put together, which is only \$26 billion compared to \$175.4 billion.

One time at a regional pastor's retreat, this is a little bit embarrassing to tell you this story, we were doing a retreat at an Airbnb in New Jersey and they decided that we should go have dinner at Hard Rock Cafe.

[29 : 02] I don't know if you've been to Atlantic City. And so we're trying to go to Hard Rock Cafe and none of us had ever been there and so none of us knew that in order to get to Hard Rock Cafe, you have to walk through the entire Hard Rock Casino.

And so that's the first time I've ever walked through a casino and so for a pastor's retreat, I know. And so I'm walking through and it was shocking.

I mean, all the lights, all these slot machines and the card tables, honestly, it looked like a temple. It looked like a temple to the God of mammon, money.

These slot machines are these totems that people pray and these card tables are these altars where they sacrifice what they have. And you know what?

What they have for decorations, I don't even know who thought of this, red dragons. Like what you see in Revelation 12. The appeal of gambling primarily, isn't it?

[30 : 12] Isn't the appeal of gambling primarily the thrill of winning free, unearned money? Or the thrill of gaining vast sums of money quickly?

Isn't that the appeal of gambling? Proverbs 13, 11 teaches us, wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.

The wisdom of Proverbs is borne out by the experience of lottery winners all over the country. Certified financial planner Board of Standards estimates that nearly one-third of lottery winners go bankrupt within three to five years.

Wealth gained hastily dwindles. 1 Timothy 6, 6-10 says, But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world, but if we have food and clothing with these, we will be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils.

[31 : 20] It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. If we really believe what the Bible teaches about money, that the love of money and the desire to be rich is the root of all kinds of evils, then we have no business as Christians wanting to be rich.

Why do you want to be rich? So that the destruction of the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things can choke the word of God, the gospel in our lives, so that it doesn't bear any fruit? That's what Jesus warned about in Mark 4, 18-19. Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins.

That's the exhortation of this passage in verse 4. This exhortation, come out of her, is picked up by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6, 14-18, where he writes, Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

[32 : 34] What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Therefore, go out from their midst and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. Then I will welcome you and I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

This passage is often used to counsel Christians not to marry non-Christians, which is a good application of this principle. But this passage is articulating a more general principle that applies across the board.

If we are yoked or hitched to an unbeliever or to an unbelieving world, imagine two oxen being yoked together.

No matter how much you strain and strive, you will never be able to go where that other ox doesn't want to go. You're yoked.

[33 : 38] You have to go where that other ox goes. That's why this is so important. Come out of her. Come out of her.

But how do we do that exactly? I don't think it means literally remove ourselves from the world's economic system and then go live in a monastery. Why do I not think that?

Because none of the seven churches that are addressed in chapters 2 and 3 by John were in Rome. So they never had to actually leave Rome because they were already not in Rome. I don't think this means we need to go live off-grid somewhere.

If we retreat to a monastery, then we forsake our Christ-given mission to bear witness to him and to make disciples of all nations. You can't do that as a recluse. So what does it look like to come out of Babylon then?

I'm going to share a quote with you. It might seem irrelevant at first, but I think it will be relevant. In the book, *The Tech-Wise Family*, which is about putting technology in its proper place so that it doesn't dominate the lives of our family members and children, the author, Christian author Andy Crouch, writes that while his approach, quote, doesn't require us to become Amish, entirely separating ourselves from the modern technological world, it requires making choices that most of our neighbors aren't making.

[35 : 10] He summarizes his point this way, quote, you don't have to become Amish, but you probably have to become closer to Amish than you think.

I agree with him when it comes to technology, and I believe that sentiment is also true when it comes to our engagement with the consumeristic and materialistic world. You don't have to become Amish, but you'll probably have to become closer to Amish than you think.

we need to flee its influence. I think coming out of Babylon looks like finding contentment in Christ. Hebrews 13, 5 says, keep your life from the love of money and be content with what you have.

For he has said, I will never forsake you or leave you. Are you discontent? Are you always looking for something else to satisfy you, something you don't have?

Are you envious of others who have something that you don't have, or are you content in Christ who said to you, I will never leave you nor forsake you? I think coming out of Babylon looks like trusting in God's provision instead of our own provision for ourselves or the world's provision.

[36 : 28] He says in Luke 12, 29 to 32, do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your father knows that you need them.

Instead, seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you. 1 Timothy 6, 17 commands the rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but instead to put their hope in the certainty of the God who richly provides everything we need.

I think people who are content in Christ will be appropriately frugal, but frugality in and of itself is not the goal because people can be frugal because they trust in money as their sense of security.

I need to have more money in the bank account. I need to spend less because if I don't, something might happen. that's still idolatry of money. Every bit as much as spendthrift spending.

Job said in 31, Job 31, 24, to make gold our trust or confidence is to be false to God. Riches are uncertain, but God who provides for us is certain, and that's our anchor and foundation for us as believers.

[37 : 52] I think coming out of Babylon looks like radical generosity. Jesus says in Luke 12, 33, 34, Sell your possessions and give to the needy.

Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Similarly, continuing the reading from 1 Timothy 6, 18 and 19 I read earlier, Do good, be rich in good works. This is what he commands the rich people to do. Do good, be rich in good works. Be generous and ready to share the storing up treasure for yourselves as a good foundation for the future so that you may take hold of that which is truly life. Are you storing up treasures in heaven or are you storing up treasures on earth?

Adam Smith, the father of modern capitalism and the author of Wealth of Nations understood that the foundation, the basis for our capitalistic economy is self-interest.

[39 : 07] It works. It works as a system because humans are sinful and selfish. That's why socialism doesn't work. But, as Christians, we ought to do more than generate capital by enriching ourselves.

What purchases can we forego? What possessions can we sell? And how can we order our finances so that we can give more to the cause of the gospel and to the needs of the saints?

That's how people who are investing in heavenly treasure rather than in earthly treasure live. Come out of Babylon. French philosopher Jacques Ellul writes in his provocative book Money and Power, I think I have a quote if you want to follow along with me.

The ultimate expression of this Christian attitude toward the power of money is what we will call profanation, to profane money. Like all other powers, to profane money is to take away its sacred character.

We must bring money back to its simple role as a material instrument. When money is no more than an object, when it has lost its seductiveness, its supreme value, its superhuman splendor, then we can use it like any other of our belongings.

[40 : 33] There is one act, par excellence, which profanes money by going directly against the law of money, an act for which money is not made. That act is giving.

It is, as a matter of fact, the penetration of grace into the world of competition and selling. We have very clear indications that money in the Christian life is made in order to be given away.

Giving to God is the act of profanation, par excellence. We need to regain an appreciation of gifts that are not utilitarian. We should meditate on the story in the Gospel of John where Mary wastes precious ointment on Jesus.

The one who protests against this free gift is Judas. He would have preferred it to be used for good works, for the poor. He wanted such an enormous sum of money to be spent usefully.

Giving to God introduces the useless into the world of efficiency. And this is an essential witness to faith in today's world. Have you ever done something for God that is absolutely wasteful and extravagant?

[41 : 49] Not for the sake of usefulness or efficiency, but out of your love. We also must come out of the self-glorying luxury of Babylon lest we partake in Babylon's plagues.

As it says in verse 4, the fall of Babylon approaches ineluctably and when God finally judges Babylon, his judgment will be fair and will be swift.

First, God's judgment of Babylon is going to be fair. As we saw in verse 2, Babylon the prostitute filled the world with her uncleanness and she is herself going to be filled with unclean spirits and unclean beasts.

Punishment fits the crime. Verses 6 and 7 say, Pay her back as she herself has paid back others and repay her double for her deeds. Mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.

As she glorified herself and lived in luxury so give her a like measure of torment and mourning. As Babylon glorified herself and lived in luxury so God will give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

[43 : 06] But that principle of equivalent punishment or just retribution seems to be contradicted by the second half of verse 6 where it says repay her double for her deeds.

makes a double portion for her in the cup. How is that fair or proportionate? The word double in Greek is versatile just says it is in English.

It can mean in certain contexts twice as much but in some other contexts like here it means duplicate or twin or matching equivalent.

punishment. So when an actor has a body double in the movie that means the double takes the place of the actor for certain stunts.

It doesn't mean that the double appears with the actor in the same scene so that there's two of them. Right? So in a similar way here when it speaks of double it's not talking about twice as much it's talking about equivalent punishment a duplicate punishment for the exact thing that she has done.

[44 : 12] That's what the word double means when it's used in the context of repayment or recompense as you hear in Revelation 18 verse 6. So that means the biblical principle which is consistent throughout all of Scripture of lex talionis which means eye for eye the law of retaliation is still holds here.

God punishes in a fair and commensurate way that's equal to their crime. And this fairness of God's judgment is expressed in the repetition of key words. For example the word found is repeated four times.

It says in verse 14 all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you never to be found again. Verse 21 says so will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence and will be found no more.

Verse 22 the sound of harpists and musicians of flute players and trumpeters will be heard in you no more and the craftsmen of any craft will be found in you no more and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more.

And why will none of these things be found anymore? Because verse 24 says in her was found the blood of the prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on earth.

[45 : 26] Babylon enriched herself by impoverishing God's people by cutting them off from its wealth for their refusal to partake in her idolatry and sexual immorality.

and Babylon made Mary at the expense of God's people persecuting them while she partied and reveled in her sexual immorality but in the end the blood of martyrs that were found in her will cry out for vengeance and Babylon will be found no more.

Several times in this passage Babylon the prostitute is described as great. She's called Babylon the great verse 2 the great city in verses 10 16, 18, 19, 21. in verse 23 it says your merchants were the great ones of the earth.

Those who consort with Babylon in her sexual immorality are the kings of the earth the merchants the seafarers the great ones of the earth and don't we all have the tendency to idolize and worship those who are great and powerful and rich and famous.

But don't marvel at the self-glorifying luxury of Babylon. The great city will fall because her corresponding punishment will be great.

[46 : 41] Her judgment is announced by an angel having great authority in verse 1. Verse 21 says a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea so will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence.

This verse is an allusion to Jeremiah 51-63 where the book or the scroll containing the prophecies of judgment God's judgment on the ancient city of Babylon is contained this scroll and Jeremiah instructs his servant to take it and tie a stone around it and then throw it into the Euphrates so that it can never rise again.

And that symbolic act is depicting the fact that Babylon will be judged like that judgment scroll that is sinking to the bottom of the waters that will never rise again. There will be no resurrection after that final judgment for the city of Babylon.

It's a frightful thing to think about. I mean, I think the Titanic I think is still at the bottom of the ocean. Nobody could get it out.

And to that Jeremiah allusion, John ties the idea of the great millstone which Jesus talked about in Matthew 18.6. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone tied around his neck and thrown into the sea.

[48 : 13] Babylon, the prostitute who made the people who believe in Christ to sin will be sunk to the depth of the sea with a great millstone around her neck never to rise again.

In verse 10, Babylon is called a mighty city. So it is all the more fitting that a mighty angel takes that stone like a great millstone and throws it into the sea in verse 21.

And it says in verse 8, For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine and she will be burned up with fire for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

In this day, Babylon appears mighty to us. But on that day, we will all see and the whole world will see that the Lord God is mighty.

So will you throw in your lot with Babylon or will you throw in your lot with the Lord God? The wise investor will take up the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ no matter how hard things get in this life.

[49 : 28] God's judgment of Babylon will not only be fair, it will also be swift. Verse 8 said that her plagues will come in a single day. That idea is echoed in the expression single hour.

Verse 10, for in a single hour your judgment has come. Verse 17, for in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste. Verse 19, for in a single hour she has been laid waste.

This is a shocking revelation because Babylon, which was Rome in John's day, seemed permanent and indestructible. You can hear that boast of Babylon in verse 7, I sit as a queen.

I am no widow and morning I shall never see. That's her boast. But for all her boasting, God's judgment comes on her on a single day, in a single hour and she becomes a burning city and a desolate, abandoned prostitute.

Poets like Tibullus, Virgil, and Livy extolled Rome as the eternal city. and Ovid called it the capital of the world.

[50 : 38] As the proverb goes, popularized by English playwright John Haywood, Rome was not built in one day, but Rome was sacked in one day.

August. The fact that God's judgment is swift doesn't mean that God is impatient or quick to anger. He is slow to anger. We see that clearly in verse 5. For her sins are heaped high as heaven and God has remembered her iniquities. God has delayed his judgment out of his patience and mercy until Babylon's sins are heaped high as the heavens, literally right up in his nose.

God waits in his patience until then. But when the time to judge comes, God will bring all the iniquities of Babylon to remembrance and then she will perish in a single day.

What looks glorious and beautiful and luxurious to you in this world? The billionaires, the CEOs, Amazon, Google, Meta, Harvard University, MIT, Boston, New York City, Wall Street, Hollywood, they might all seem eternal and glorious to us, don't they?

[52 : 17] But they are not. If Rome can fall, so can they. And Babylon will fall in a single hour. But the church of Christ, the people of God who endured in their faithfulness to Christ without committing sexual immorality with Babylon, those who have repented of their sins and have trusted in Jesus for salvation, they will be sacrificed as his forever bride.

And that's why this passage exhorts us to come out of the self-glorifying luxury of Babylon lest we partake in Babylon's plagues.

This picture of fleeing from a city that is about to fall under God's judgment is a common motif in the Old Testament for prophetic books. It says that about Babylon in Jeremiah 51, but I think probably the more vivid images that you're familiar with is the story of Korah and Dathan and Abiram in Numbers 16.

They rebel against Moses, God's appointed prophet and leader of God's people, and when they refuse to repent, Moses tells the Israelites, depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs lest you be swept away with all their sins.

And when the people of God separate themselves from them, the earth opens up and swallows the wicked men. Similarly, in Genesis 19, 15, before he unleashed the fire and sulfur on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the angels of God urged Lot, saying, up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.

[53 : 55] As they are coming out of Sodom, however, you know the story, Lot's wife looks back at the sinful city that is burning.

despite the fact that she was specifically committed not to look back. And consequently, she becomes a pillar of salt. Brothers and sisters, what is preventing you from coming out of Babylon? What keeps you looking back with longing and regret? Leave it all behind. Come out of her lest you share in her punishment.

Andrew Carnegie, as you guys know, was a 19th century industrialist who became one of the richest Americans in history through his steel industry. By the age of 33, he was already filthy rich.

And at that point, he still had incredible self-awareness. He was raised in a Christian home and I think he speaks of the idolatry of money and he wrote a memorandum, a note to himself because he could feel the creeping effect of the idolatry of money.

[55 : 08] And he made a note to himself that he would resign business at 35 in two years. Because he said, to continue much longer overwhelmed by business scares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make more money in the shortest time must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery.

I would resign business at 35. Carnegie, unfortunately, never came out of Babylon.

He did not resign business at 35. He worked to the ripe old age and the worship of money did degrade him beyond hope of permanent recovery.

Despite his many philanthropic works in his name, his steel company was known for brutal hours, crowded and filthy working conditions so that most of his employees died before the age of 40 from accidents or disease.

Andrew Carnegie died having lost his faith in God altogether as a man who thought much of his own wealth and philanthropy but not much of God and his philanthropy toward us in Christ.

[56 : 24] Christ, we ought to come out of the self-glorifying luxury of Babylon lest we partake in Babylon's sins and plagues but how do we find the strength to do it?

If Andrew Carnegie failed, how do we know we won't fail? When Paul is exhorting the Corinthian believers to give generously toward the needy saints, he reveals to us the truth, the gospel that has the power to set us free from the love and idolatry of money.

He says in 2 Corinthians 8, 9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Jesus traded his heavenly throne for an earthly stable and he was born in the form of a servant in the humiliating form of man. Jesus gave up the treasures of heaven in order to make us sinful wretches that we are his treasured possession.

He gave up his heavenly treasures to make us his treasured possession. And do you remember that glorious throne room scene of God in chapter 4, verse 6, the beautiful sea of glass like crystal, a pavement of sapphire stone like the very heavens for clearness.

[57 : 58] That's what Jesus left to walk the dirty streets of Jerusalem so that he can die on the cross and pay for our sins and redeem us from our slavery to sin and death.

Jesus moved in to the ghettos and the slums of sin so that he might remove our rags and clothe us with the splendid robe of his righteousness.

And that's why later on in Revelation 21 when it describes the attire of the bride of the lamb or the decorations the precious stones that are on the new city of Jerusalem.

It mentions all kinds of precious jewels and gold and pearls because that's what Christ won for us. And it's when we behold Christ who forsook his heavenly treasure to make us his treasure possession.

[59 : 00] That's when the allure of money the power of money the way you find your security in money and your significance in money loses its power.

Oh my. Christian brothers and sisters one day we're going to be rich beyond measure.

We're going to be beautiful beyond compare. But that day is not yet.

So let's come out of Babylon and be faithful to our bridegroom until that day when God dwells with us forever. Let's pray.

God fill our hearts with wonder at your mercy.

[60 : 23] How can it be? How can it be that Jesus our Lord died for us? That the Son of Heaven came to the ghettos of earth the slums of our sin to bear our burdens.

and lift us up from our poverty. God you deserve our eternal praise. Help us to treasure Christ so that we can come out of Babylon.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.