

Sermon on Revelation 17

Theme: “The Judgment of the Great Harlot”

Introduction

The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain on the final conflict between good and evil. Revelation 17 presents us with the vision of “the great harlot,” sitting upon many waters, arrayed in purple and scarlet, full of abominations. This chapter gives us insight into the religious, political, and spiritual corruption of the last days. It shows us the seductive power of Babylon and God’s ultimate judgment upon her.

1. The Great Harlot Exposed (vv.1–6)

- The angel introduces John to the “great harlot who sits on many waters” (v.1). The waters symbolize peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (v.15). This harlot represents a corrupt religious system dominating the world.
- She is described as “arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (v.4), outwardly glorious but inwardly vile.
- She holds “a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication” (v.4). This mirrors Jeremiah 51:7: *“Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunk.”*
- John marvels as he sees her drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (v.6). She persecutes true believers relentlessly.

2. The Mystery of the Beast (vv.7–14)

- The harlot rides a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns (v.3). The beast represents political power and kingdoms opposed to God.
- The seven heads are explained as both mountains and kings (v.9–10). Historically, Rome was built on seven hills, but prophetically this points to kingdoms in rebellion against God.
- The ten horns are ten kings who receive authority for “one hour” with the beast (v.12). They unite to wage war against the Lamb, but “the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (v.14).
- What comfort! Even though worldly powers unite against Christ, the Lamb triumphs with His called, chosen, and faithful followers (cf. Daniel 7:21–22).

3. The Fall of the Harlot (vv.15–18)

- The beast and the ten horns eventually turn against the harlot, making her desolate and burning her with fire (v.16). Evil always destroys itself.
- Verse 17 reveals God’s sovereignty: *“For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose.”* Even wicked rulers unknowingly serve God’s ultimate plan.
- The chapter ends by identifying the woman as “that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (v.18). In John’s Day this pointed to Rome; in prophecy it foreshadows the end-time Babylon.

Application

1. Beware of spiritual compromise. The harlot represents a false, idolatrous religion that lures people away from truth. 2 Corinthians 6:17—*“Come out from among them and be separate.”*
2. Trust in the sovereignty of God. Though evil appears to reign, God is directing history toward His purpose.
3. Stand firm with Christ the Lamb. Though the world unites against Him, the Lamb shall overcome.

Conclusion

Revelation 17 unmasks the corrupt systems of the world and warns of their end. It reminds us that the church must remain pure, faithful, and loyal to Christ. The final victory belongs not to Babylon but to the Lamb who was slain and is risen.

Sermon on Revelation 18

Theme: “The Fall of Babylon the Great”

Introduction

Chapter 18 continues the vision by describing the sudden destruction of Babylon, the world’s corrupt commercial and political system. While chapter 17 exposed the false religious side of Babylon, chapter 18 highlights her economic and materialistic corruption. The chapter portrays a dramatic collapse that shakes the nations, merchants, and kings of the earth.

1. The Proclamation of Babylon’s Fall (vv.1–8)

- An angel descends from heaven with great authority, and the earth is illuminated with his glory (v.1). He cries, *“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons”* (v.2).
- Nations and kings have committed fornication with her; merchants have grown rich through her luxury (v.3). This echoes Jeremiah 51:8—*“Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.”*
- God’s people are warned: *“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues”* (v.4). Separation from worldliness is vital (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).
- Her sins have reached heaven, and God remembers her iniquities (v.5). Though judgment seems delayed, it is certain.

2. The Lament of the Kings, Merchants, and Mariners (vv.9–19)

- The kings of the earth mourn her fall, standing at a distance for fear of her torment (v.10). Their sorrow is selfish—they weep over lost power and pleasure.

- Merchants weep because no one buys their goods anymore (v.11). A detailed list of luxury items follows (vv.12–13), including gold, silver, fine linen, and even “bodies and souls of men”—the exploitation of human life.
- Mariners also cry out (vv.17–19) as their trade collapses. The repeated phrase “in one hour” (vv.10, 17, 19) emphasizes the swiftness of her destruction.

3. The Rejoicing of Heaven (vv.20–24)

- While the earth mourns, heaven rejoices: “*Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!*” (v.20).
- A mighty angel casts a great millstone into the sea, saying, “*Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore*” (v.21).
- Her music, industry, and trade will cease forever (vv.22–23). Her sorcery deceived the nations, and in her was found the blood of prophets and saints (v.24).

Application

1. Guard against materialism. Babylon’s sin was greed, luxury, and exploitation. Jesus warned, “*What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*” (Mark 8:36).
2. Be separate from worldliness. God calls His people to “come out” of Babylon. We cannot love both God and the world (1 John 2:15–17).
3. Look forward to God’s justice. Though evil prospers for a time, God will avenge His people and bring down every corrupt system.

Conclusion

Revelation 18 reminds us that the glitter of this world is temporary. Babylon’s wealth, power, and luxury crumble in an hour. But the Kingdom of Christ is everlasting. Let us not invest our lives in Babylon, but in the New Jerusalem that will come down from heaven.