

Before we have today's Bible reading, let's have a very quick refresher on what the city of Babylon represents:

Babylon is a symbol – it's a symbol of the arrogance and extravagance and the indulgence, of man in godless civilisation.

Babylon represents:

1. a society that rejects God;
2. It's a place where its people elevate **themselves** to the place of God (humanism)
3. It's a society that rejects the **Law** of God, and because it has no basis for its morality, it descends into **immorality**
4. It's a society that tramples the world's poor, and takes advantage of the world's weak
5. And it persecutes the disciples of Jesus, because disciples of Jesus Christ live **counter** to the culture **of** Babylon

OK, so let's read Revelation 18.

18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ² 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.

³ 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."

⁴ 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;

⁵ for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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 no widow,
and mourning I shall never see.'

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."

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.”

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, ¹² 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, ¹³ cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

¹⁴ “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendours are lost to you, never to be found again!”

¹⁵ The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

16 "Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!

17 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 ¹⁸ and
cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

"What city was like the great city?"

19 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.

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!"

21 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;

- ²² 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,
- ²³ 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.
- ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth."

What's the fruit for which your soul most longs?

Is it the fruit of the Spirit? Or does your soul long,,, more for the fruits of physical pleasures, or physical niceties??? What fruit, does your soul, **most** long for?

So, I guess another way of asking that might be:

- What do you spend most of your time pursuing?
- What do you most dream about?
- What do you invest most of your money towards?

- What do you spend most of your energy, striving to achieve?

- Possessions?
- Position?
- Assets?
- Qualifications?
- Entertainment?
- Sport?

Or maybe you dream of acquiring:

- Real Estate?
- Gadgets?

Or maybe it's:

- Public recognition you want; or
- Authority?
- Seniority?

Or maybe your heart longs for:

- Romance
- Or for a family,
- Or maybe it's just a longing to be loved
- Or to be wanted and needed

What fruit, does your soul, **most** long for?

As we've been working our way through this book of the Revelation, something that's really struck me, is how much time it spends telling us about the downfall of Babylon – about the downfall of Godless civilisation, in all of its wealth and prosperity and its rejection of God...

The Book of Revelation, attaches an enormous significance, to this event:

- We catch little glimpses of it in Revelation ch14 and again in ch16.

- But then, the **whole** of chapters 17 and 18, are **all about** the fall of Babylon...

Now, when John wrote the **Gospel** of John, he only wrote 2 chapters on the **Resurrection of Jesus Christ**, and now he's giving us 2 complete chapters on the fall of Babylon. This should be giving us a bit of a hint of just how highly significant this event will be... But why????

There are 2 great evils that seek to derail God's children:

- One is the attack against, where Satan would try to destroy us, or to destroy our faith in some way;
- But the other, is a much more subtle temptation – it's a temptation to draw aside.

And usually, a subtle temptation is much more effective in derailing Christians, than the head-on attack... You see, when Satan attacks us head-on, it's obvious what he's doing, and so what do we do about it? We fall on our knees (of course), and we pray, and we stand firm **against** the Devil and his nefarious schemes...

But a subtle temptation – a temptation, to draw aside – well, that's not so obvious (that's what “subtle” means). It just draws us in, and **as** it draws us **in**, it draws us **away**. And that, is the effect that the pleasures of physical life, can have on us.

The longing of our soul:

- is diverted from the things of the Spirit, to the things of the flesh
- it's diverted from the eternal, to the temporary

- The longing of our soul, is diverted from the things of God, to the things of man.
- From the **knowledge** of God (and delighting in being in the presence of God), to delighting in the feelings of earthly experiences

And this is why the downfall of Babylon is going to be such a significant event. For millennia:

- the wealth;
- the trappings;
- the pleasures;
- the sexuality;
- the sensuality;
- the entertainment;
- the arts; and
- even the lifestyle of Godless civilisation,

has tugged at the heartstrings of just about everybody. Not many of us are immune from it. I'm not... And it draws us away. It diverts us, from Godliness.

Babylon is demonicⁱ; it's impureⁱⁱ; it's immoral; it's unfaithful; it's also intoxicating – it's addictive;.... And we like it, because it brings prosperity; its luxurious; it's exciting; it's enticing; and it can deliver so much of what our hearts long for.... It promises what we want now, and we don't have to wait...

But God says:

“Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,

lest you share in her plagues:

Are you hearing this? When the people of God take part in the sins of Godless civilisation, her judgment, is theirs....

Our Godless civilisation, entices us, and traps us, in the ways of Godlessness. It's **very hard**, to live in Babylon, without taking on the ways of the Babylonians, but the true children of God, do exactly that... What do you think the letters to the 7 churches at the beginning of the book of Revelation are about? Sometimes they were commended, because they were living as God's children,,,,, But some were warned that they were about to be judged, because they were beginning to live, just the same as the Godless world around them... (especially in the sins of idolatry; immorality)

So, in what ways, do Christians get drawn into the ways of Godless society? Well, there's heaps of ways, but here's just a few examples:

1.

Let's begin with **Materialism**

Can we ever have enough stuff?

- Yes, I know a **saucepan** will cook rice, but a rice-cooker, is **dedicated** to cooking rice – I've gotta get me one of them.
- Yes, I know the kids will have lots of fun with a bat and ball out in the back yard, but they're really missing out, because the other kids have got the latest X-Box. We might treat our kids to an X-Box for Christmas.

- Yes, I know my old chainsaw is a very good chainsaw, but this **other** one is easier to climb a tree with – I need to get one. (I'm having a dig at myself there)

Can we ever have enough stuff?

And don't think for a moment, "It's only the wealthy who have to have all the latest gadgets".

When we visited Tonga, most Tongans live in very simple homes of 2 or 3 very small rooms, and they don't have much, but what struck me, was the number of teenagers, who had their own mobile phone. And the mobile phone plans, are very similar in cost, to what we pay here. They would be paying more for their mobile phones, than what they pay for their food in a month...

It's not only the wealthy, who want to have the latest gadgets;

Materialism – we always want more:

- A newer car
- A bigger house
- A new pair of shoes
- A dress we haven't already worn
- Another diamond ring
- Another gun
- More land
- More cattle
- A change in furniture
- More irrigation entitlement
- A bigger superannuation fund

Do we ever stop to consider, that if we did with **less**, we could be helping those, who have nothing?

I wonder how many more people would be saved, if we put **less** energy, into striving for more, and we put **more** energy into sharing the Gospel...

And so **materialism**, is something that diverts us from Godly living. But when God judges Babylon, the merchants are going to weep, because the whole system's going to collapse. Our bank accounts, will be worth nothing. Your shares and your super fund, will be worthless... Do we realise, that everything we have, is temporary, and it's worthless. And for us to pursue materialism, is to be diverted from God's eternal pursuits.

2.

Alright, what about **immorality**? How do Christians get drawn aside, into the Babylonian ways of immorality?

Satan has done a very good job, of convincing (even) Christians, that the moral standards that **were** the norm in our culture over the last 100 years or so, are simply 'old fashioned' and out-dated for today...

Do you know why (traditionally), our society had the moral standards it did???

During the period of the great revivals, stretching from the mid 1700's through to the mid 1900's, so many people came to faith in Christ, and so many people, had a life-changing

experience, that their transformed lives, **influenced** a whole society...

For example:

When under the ministry of John Wesley, the Methodist revival began, English society was in a state of moral depravity...

Drunkenness; Violence; Sexual Immorality.....

In a book published in 1811, a bloke by the name of “William Hurd”, set out to describe all of the religions of the world. And when he described the Methodist revival, and the impact that God was making in lives, he said this:

A stronger impression was made on their minds, of the importance of things eternal, and they had more earnest desires of serving God, than they had ever had from their earliest childhood. Thus did God begin to draw them towards himself, with the cords of love, with the bands of a man. Many of these were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins. They were also made thoroughly sensible of those tempers which are justly hateful to God and man, and of their utter ignorance of God, and entire inability either to know, love, or serve Him.

(Alright, so in other words, they were convicted that they were sinful creatures).

*At the same time, they saw in the strongest light, the insignificance of their outside religion; nay, and often confessed it before God, as the most abominable hypocrisy. Thus did they sink deeper and deeper into that repentance which must **ever** precede faith in the Son of God. And from hence springs fruits meet for*

repentance: The drunkard commenced sober and temperate; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication; the unjust from oppression and wrong. He that had been accustomed to curse and swear for many years, now swore no more. The sluggard began to work with his own hands, that he might eat his own bread. The miser learned to deal his bread to the hungry, and to cover the naked with a garment. Indeed the whole form of their lives was changed. They had left off doing evil, and learned to do well.ⁱⁱⁱ

What was he describing? He was describing the acts of repentance, combined with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He's describing a life transformed by the Spirit of God – which is the life of a disciple of Jesus....

And there were so many of these disciples of Jesus, who were beginning to live **Godly** lives, that Godly morals became the new standard for their society...

In that same book, he goes on to say this:

“In London particularly, a great change was soon perceived in the majority of the common people; an unusual seriousness appeared in their countenances; they refrained from profane cursing and swearing, and the alehouses were deprived of their usual inebriated guests....”

You see, morality's got nothing to do with being 'old-fashioned'... Morality is about 'spiritual renewal'. And likewise, **immorality** has nothing to do with being liberated and modern and 'up-to-date'... Immorality is about embracing the old 'spiritual depravity' – it's an expression of the same old **Godlessness**...

As I talk with other pastors, I've discovered that we share, an increasing concern: Why do so many people, who profess to being Christian, engage in drunkenness; pre-marital sex, or even 'live together' before they're married, and don't see anything wrong with it? How can they possibly see this as something which is compatible with their Christian faith???

And I don't know what their answer is: Many see it as "Times have changed. Societal norms have changed as well.", and That's true,,,, because we live in a Godless society – we live in Babylon.... And we shouldn't be surprised, that as our society gets more and more Godless, their morals and ethics begin to crumble, but what's that got to do with a Christian???

For a disciple of Jesus, to be living by the Spirit, means we do not conform to the morals of Babylon,,,, Disciples of Jesus are **transformed**, to live out Kingdom values... Christianity, without Godly transformation, is empty religion.

And so Christians get drawn aside, to immorality.

3.

Thirdly, some get drawn aside to **idolatry**.

Some begin to embrace the practices of other religions, feeling that "It doesn't really hurt."

But it does. Idolatry, is being unfaithful to God.

4.

And a fourth example, would be **selfishness**.

There's no doubt about it – We, are the “me” generation. And we've got to look after ourselves first – that's what we get told. And it's easy for us to begin to believe this, and get diverted from the things of God, for reasons of “selfishness”.

The first thing we have to give up, when we become a Christian, is self.

The way of Jesus, is the way of ‘self-sacrifice’, and yet many see it as the way of self-fulfilment, where Christianity becomes important to us, as long as I can get something out of it. Is that really why we're disciples of Jesus – so we can get something out of it?

Shouldn't we be disciples of Jesus because He is **worthy** to be worshipped and He is **worthy** to be followed, (no matter what the cost), simply because He is Lord...

Jesus said: **Luke 17:33** **Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.**

That's just a few examples, of ways that our Godless society, can diverts us from the path of Christ, onto a path of Godlessness. That's what Godless society does, and that's why it's such an important event – when Babylon is destroyed...

So, I'm going to finish, how we began:
What's the fruit for which your soul most longs?

Will you be glad, for Babylon, and all of its prosperity, and luxuries and security, to be gone? Or are you going to weep?

I guess the question is, “Are we living in the Spirit, and living for eternity???” , or “Are we living for today, and for that which is not eternal?

Questions?

ⁱ V2.... She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit...

ⁱⁱ v2... a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

ⁱⁱⁱ William Hurd, 'A New Universal History Of The Religious Rites, Ceremonies And Customs Of The Whole World Or A Complete And Impartial View Of All The Religions', London, 1811 (<https://archive.org/details/newuniversalhist00hurduoft>). P.714