

Judgment on
Babylon

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’” (Revelation 18:4, 5, NKJV).



At the end of time, many things are not what they seem. Babylon and its partners in deception will all be revealed. The evil seeds that were seemingly under the surface will be exposed with their fruit, eventually uprooted, and finally destroyed.

Introduction

The Process of Judgment

Rev. 17:1, 2

A news item online caught my attention. A judge in South Africa had ruled against two paramedics who abandoned an elderly, sick woman in an ambulance and disappeared. Delivering the judgment, the judge ruled that the conduct displayed by the paramedics contravened the patient's dignity and right to proper health care.

The court heard that back in 2009, two paramedics were assigned the duty to transport the sick woman to a health facility in Port Shepstone—a task that they never completed. Instead of handing over the patient to the hospital, the paramedics left the patient in the back of the ambulance in the hospital's ambulance depot.

“They abandoned a vulnerable, sick elderly woman in an ambulance so that they could knock off.”

In his ruling, the judge delivering the sentence said, “The conduct of the employees is unacceptable and unprofessional. They abandoned a vulnerable, sick elderly woman in an ambulance so that they could knock off. The treatment the patient received is inhuman and degrading.”¹

Before this court ruling, the paramedics had been dismissed from their positions in the hospital but challenged their dismissal in a labor court, which ruled that they be reinstated. This is just one episode of a worldly judgment, which is often riddled with twists and turns.

A judgment is an explanation that a court of law gives at the end of the hearing of a case. The judgment also explains why the court made a particular order. In some instances, a judge or a team of judges delivers reasons for the judgment.

Worldly judgments are not always just. Human judges are prone to threats, bribery, and bias, while other legal machineries are prone to manipulation by interested parties. In the end, many worldly court rulings turn out inaccurate and unfair. We can draw a difference between worldly judgments that take place in worldly courts manned by humans and a heavenly judgment that God delivers. In a heavenly judgment, nothing is compromised. Unlike worldly judges whose judgment can be compromised, God's decision is final. The Bible in Galatians 6:7 teaches that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

This week we study about the final judgment that God will deliver upon Babylon. May the Holy Spirit lead us to a deeper understanding.

1. Ernest Mabuza, “Judge Has Harsh Word for Paramedics Who Abandoned Elderly Patient,” *Times Live*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-04-06-judge-has-harsh-words-for-paramedics-who-abandoned-elderly-patient/>.

Rev. 14:8

Evidence *Babylon of Our Time*

Religious Babylon, much as it existed in the time of John, is with us in the twenty-first century. With what goes around in religious circles today, we may say that we are living in the times of the great apostasy. Today, many churches proclaim Christianity but practice a different thing. This simply fulfills what Paul wrote: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4, NASB).

Only those who will remain unrepentant to the end will face destruction with the prince of darkness.

As predicted in 2 Timothy, many professedly Christian churches today openly approve of homosexuality while others have embraced the theory of evolution. These activities only point to the workings of the dragon through the beast. It is clear that Satan is working day and night to mix up things, confuse people, and lead them to make decisions contrary to what the Bible teaches.

In Revelation 14:8, John describes a scene of destruction upon Babylon. Apparently God will finally judge the world. However, before He destroys a wayward society forever, God has given His children a chance to repent of their sins and turn to Him. Only those who will remain unrepentant to the end will face destruction with the prince of darkness.

What we see today in society and in the church are warnings of an impending judgment that God will bring upon this world. Unfortunately, many people are still in the dark and choose to ignore the warnings. God is becoming increasingly displeased with what the world calls modern civilization.

The Bible teaches that in the last days people will be ignorant of the impending judgment (Matt. 24:37–41; 2 Pet. 3:3–10). The moral and spiritual corruptions that are becoming more prevalent, disbelief in Christ’s second coming, and the emergence of false christs all confirm that God will soon pronounce judgment on the world.

But as children of God, we have the assurance that God will intervene and give us the power to survive. Ours is to accept the truth and live by it.

REACT

In what ways do you see 2 Timothy 4:3, 4 being fulfilled?

Joseph Wambua, Makueni, Kenya

Logos

Babylon the Harlot

Rev. 13:1–8; 17:1–3, 12–15

Judging the Harlot (Rev. 17:1, 2)

Revelation chapter 17 reveals the great judgment that God will finally pass on the apostate powers that caused pain and affliction on God's people and His church. Reading the chapter restores our hope that no matter how much we suffer in this world, God will soon deliver justice, and the enemy will be destroyed forever.

In verse one, John speaks of adultery, fornication, or harlotry. In the Old Testament, the wise man Solomon warned against any union with a harlot

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(Proverbs 5–7). In the vision John relates in Revelation 17, he uses the imagery of adultery to symbolize the height of apostasy. Apostasy existed in John's day, and it continues to exist in our generation. Babylon the harlot represents the spiritual and moral degradation that plagues the church. Instead of accepting Christ as the lawful Husband, the harlot decided to go to bed with multiple men of diverse backgrounds.

The scenes in this vision speak to our generation; the moment we reject Christ in our lives, we adopt the harlot system that prompts us to surrender to the will of different masters. When that happens, we allow money, education, entertainment, and others to take the place of Christ in our lives.

The Prostitute and the Beast (Rev. 17:3)

In Revelation 13:1, we learn about the characteristics of the beast. In chapter 17 John sees a woman on a beast. The woman is presented in all manner of adornment: gold, precious stones, pearls, and purple and scarlet attire. This picture points to worldly honor and riches, which the apostate church can command.

In his efforts to lure Christ to his side, Satan promised Him worldly riches and power (Matt. 4:8, 9). The presentation of the woman and the beast mirrors the same things that the world continues to offer, if only we will reject Christ.

As for her residence: the woman sits upon the beast. What about her diet? She feeds on the blood of the saints.

From this vision, it is evident that the woman and the beast are symbols of worldly powers that continue to work against God's people. Persecution of Christians is something that still takes place in many parts of the world, but it will reach its climax when the apostate church unites with global political

powers to implement religious laws that everyone must follow.

The good news is that amid all the tribulations, both the harlot and the beast will be condemned and sentenced to a penalty that will see them destroyed forever (Rev. 2:22, 23).

The Beast Identified (Rev. 13:1–8)

John's vision in chapter 12 ends with an angry dragon that goes to make war with those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Christ. Chapter 13 of Revelation reveals a beast rising out of the sea. It is here to perpetuate the story of the dragon. John writes, "The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2, ASV).

Through the beast, the dragon found the best means to advance his powers of persecution. In addition, he found the best vehicle to rise to power so that he could be worshiped. In the vision of the beast from the sea, John describes a situation in which a worldly power is arising, which Satan will use to execute his plans.

The prophecies of Revelation are closely linked to those of Daniel (Dan. 2:42; 7:7, 8; 9:27; 11:36). Daniel 7 helps us interpret the meaning of Revelation 17. For instance, by connecting Revelation 17:1–5 with Daniel 7:2, 3, we can find an indication that John refers to Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

For Christians, knowing the beast and his agents is of utmost importance. Once we know the beast and all that he uses to trap us, we can find the best ways to avoid his traps through the Holy Spirit.

The Fall of Babylon (Rev. 17:12–15)

The culmination of events in Revelation 17 shows that God has been involved in the affairs of the world, not leaving His children alone to suffer at the hands of the enemy.

When the dragon discovers that he is no longer able to execute his advances through the worldly powers and he senses that he cannot destroy the people of God, he launches his attack in a different way.

On the surface, the beast and his followers appear stronger than the Lamb and His army. However, the Lamb finally gains victory over the beast. Christ, the Lamb, is destined to reign. From this vision, we learn that Christ is the Lord of lords and King of kings. No kingdom or lordship can rise against His.

REACT

1. What does the fall of Babylon teach us about the character of God and how He intends to conclude the history of this world?
2. When do you think the battle between the dragon and the Lamb will end? Support your answer with scripture.
3. What assurance do we have that even in the midst of tribulations Christ is present among us?

Testimony

On the Judgment Day

Jer. 51:13

“At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death.”¹

“From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”

“Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan’s captives. In rejecting Christ they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to receive his suggestions and to do his bidding.”²

As Satan and his army prepare for the final attack, they seem unaware of what awaits them; the hour of their judgment has just come. In the end, they will be consumed in eternal fire.

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”³

This is just a glimpse of what will happen on that final day of judgment. One thing is sure: Christ and His faithful shall carry the day.

REACT

Why can’t everyone be saved and inherit the kingdom of God?

1. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 663.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 678.

Rev. 17:3

How-to *How Can We Avoid the Beast?*

Revelation reveals that the dragon has distributed power to his agents worldwide, with whom he works to deceive God's people. Even among Christians, there are sons and daughters of evil. They are tares growing together with the wheat. However, when the time comes, Christ will send His angels to gather the weeds, burn them, and harvest the wheat (Matt. 13:36–43).

False teachings drift from the key and true doctrines of the Bible, lacing them with a worldly touch.

But before Christ comes to take us home, we must avoid being part of the spiritual rot that takes place in our churches today. There is a breach of faith that is increasingly happening in our society. This is attributable to the work of the dragon, the beast, and their agents, whose presentation, character, and influence are outlined in Revelation 17.

For a long time there have been various forms of apostasy that have crept into the church. We need to identify the false teachers and their false teachings.

To begin with, false teachings drift from the key and true doctrines of the Bible, lacing them with a worldly touch. In other words, they sound like the real Christian doctrines, yet they are not. But apostasy can also happen as a complete renunciation of the Christian faith, where one becomes completely antichrist.

We must guard against the false teachings engineered by the beast. And the best way to do that is to know the truth. To identify a counterfeit, we must study the real thing. Jesus taught that we should recognize a tree by its fruit (Matt. 12:33). Here are some ways to identify false teachers of Christianity:

Their teachings about Christ. If the teachings do not uphold Christ and His work of redemption, then they are wanting.

Their understanding of the gospel. Paul warns, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse" (Gal. 1:9, NIV).

Their character traits that glorify the Lord. If they reject God's plan, prophesy for wealth, or promote themselves over Christ, then they miss the point (Matt. 7:15–20; Jude 11).

REACT

Can you identify any apostate doctrines in your society?

Opinion

The Beast in the Church

Rev. 17:9–11

The case of Judas Iscariot as the betrayer of Christ is an indication of how the dragon could find his way right into the church of Christ. Judas did not wholly surrender to Christ, and in the end, his actions revealed him to be totally antichrist.

While John sees images and figures in his visions, the Bible clearly explains itself regarding the symbols, figures, and images so that no one is left in doubt. The heads, mountains, and kings mentioned in Revelation 17:1–3 all portray the scale of worldly influence and power that the dragon wields. The dragon, of course, is Satan (Rev. 12:9), and his influence continues to infiltrate the church.

True Christians have a constant battle against false teachings and their teachers.

Today, there are many satanic agencies in the church, not unlike Judas Iscariot, who are trying to rob God and His people both spiritually and materially. They have sold their allegiance to Christ and now stand against Him and His principles.

The Bible, through Jude, teaches how Christians can recognize apostasy in the church and stand with Christ to the end. Jude advises Christians to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). This teaching implies that the war will be continuous. True Christians have a constant battle against false teachings and their teachers.

Every Christian is, in fact, involved in this fight—not just leaders in our churches. As believers, we should sharpen our discernment skills so that we are able, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to identify and prevent any form of apostasy in our midst. “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

False teachers sneak in, in a manner that is not easy to detect. For example, think of Judas, whom people thought of as one of the disciples; little did they know that he would betray his Master. In addition, false teachers specialize in imitating the truth so that their subjects cannot tell the difference between truth and error. Finally, they deny the only Master, Jesus Christ.

REACT

If we are able to identify false teachers in the church, how can we help them to come back to Christ?

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Rev. 16:15

Exploration

The Final Judgment

CONCLUDE

A beginning must have an end. No matter how long it takes, God will finally judge the world. The prostitute Babylon, the beast, and all related to them will come to an end. It will be a time for saints to celebrate and to confirm that God is, indeed, just and fair in His ruling. Every Christian, from all corners of the world, looks to that day—when God will finally declare the fate of sin and sinners.

CONSIDER

- Visiting a court of law to witness how judgment is delivered. Note the options that the accused person has before the final judgment is made. Compare how this is similar to or different from heavenly judgment.
- Offering a Bible study on the fall of Babylon. Which evidences can you cite in your lesson to support that spiritual Babylon will fall?
- Organizing a skit about the false teachers in the church. Use your play to spread awareness about this challenge.
- Writing descriptions of the animals used in Revelation 13:1–8. For each animal, note the characteristics that make it fit the imagery in John's vision.
- Using technology to spread the three angels' messages. Utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Think of how you can avert modern-day apostasy. Use Revelation 13:6–8 as your guide.
- Making a list of all the bad things associated with harlotry. Note how the components of your list give meaning to the spiritual Babylon described in Revelation 17:3.
- Researching the ancient kingdoms of Greece, Babylon, and Rome. Dig out more facts about them and note why they fit John's description.

CONNECT

Daniel 7:23, 24; Luke 4:6, 7; 2 Peter 2:1, 2.
Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, chap. 42, "The Controversy Ended."
Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 2nd ed., vol. 7, p. 849.