

Christians Living in Babylon

Sermon 3 in the Romans Series

Romans 1:18-32

Today we contrast the righteousness of God with the wickedness of man that brings the wrath of God – namely a wicked human culture which ignores the true and Living God – engages in false worship – a culture the Book of Revelation identifies as “Babylon.”

God’s wrath is the theme from Rev. 1:18-3:20.

In 3:21 Paul begins to explain the righteousness of God that comes through faith.

I. Why Call it Babylon? 1:18-22

v. 18 -- God’s righteousness contrasted with man’s unrighteousness.
God’s truth – **suppressed** – held down – pushed down

v. 19-20 – Man is made in the image of God – and man innately knows there is a God. That is why there are so many false religions. Man is a worshipper – but left to himself – worships things according to his own imagination.

v. 21-23 – The bottom line is false worship and idolatry in all its forms.

Not much is said of Babylon in the NT except in the Book of Revelation.
As we saw in our Revelation series – the Apostle John uses “Babylon” as a symbol of present-day wickedness, and anti-God cultures.

Rev. 14:8 -- And another angel followed, saying, “**Babylon** is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath **of her fornication.**”
This is taken from **Isaiah 21:9** -- , “Babylon is **fallen, is fallen!** And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground.”

Rev. 18:9 -- The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

Bunyan in Pilgrim’s Progress uses this type of analogy – Christian has to go through Vanity Fair – a place of wickedness and persecution. Faithful was executed there. Babylon represents wicked anti-God human culture.

II. God Gave Them Up 1:24-32

At the root of these sins lies idolatry.

Dr. J.V. Fesko: “What ultimately lies at the heart of God’s judgment is false worship – man turns to worship the creature...and man turns to worship himself. If unchecked, sinful idolatrous man will look into the proverbial mirror, fall in love with himself, worship himself, and engage in idolatry through unnatural sexual relations. Sinful humanity, male and female, turns and worships itself and becomes smitten with its own image.”

v. 24 – 25 -- God gave them up – to the lusts of their heart.

“Uncleanness” (impurity ESV) is a technical term used in the LXX for improper worship.

The prophets rebuke Israel and Judah for this, comparing the idolators to Sodom and Gomorrah.
Isaiah 1:10 - Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah:

Jeremiah 23:14 – Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem:
They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers,
So that no one turns back from his wickedness.
All of them are like Sodom to Me, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

v. 26-27 – God gave them up to vile and shameful practices (against nature)

v. 28 – God gave them up to a host of sins

Because they did not want to retain God in their knowledge.

v. 29-32 -- These are societal sins

If you are hateful and spiteful to those who have embraced the horrible trap of homosexuality – what about this ugly list that too is repugnant in God’s eyes – and men are given over to them?

Who then can be saved?

1 Cor. 6:9-11 -- ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

It is not hopeless.

None of these sins are the unpardonable sin, but all of them are unrighteousness against the righteousness of God.

Christ is the only savior of sinners – and a savior for the vilest of sinners.