May 23 & 24, 2009

"The Babylonian Bar & Bistro – Drink Up!!"

Pastor Mark Burch

Revelation 17:1-19:5

Revelation 18:2 *"…Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!.. For the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries…"*

Jeremiah 2:13 *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."*

SERMON NOTES:

The Tale of Two Cities – Two Women – Two Paths

Life & Death

Home Group Discussion Questions

History (Making it Personal)

1. What makes you weep over our city?
2. Take a map of the city – and look over it – where are the significant points of need? Where are the significant points of pain? Where are the significant points of God's movement?
3. What forms of "emperor worship" do you see our city has succumbed to? What about the church? Are we guilty of buying into the economics and politics and oppression of "Babylon"?
4. Both Old & New Testaments use the metaphor of sexual purity to illustrate spiritual purity in relationship to Christ – idolatry is defined as spiritual adultery. What other "gods" are there calling us to their beds?

Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

5. Scan through our text: Revelation 17:1-19:5
6. Spend some time in the Old Testament – recapturing the imagery of spiritual adultery. Scan through Genesis 18 and its corollary text in Ezekiel 16:49. Read Deuteronomy 11:16 and talk about the warning God's people received in advance.
7. Scan Jeremiah 2 & 3 and talk about the gradual cooling of the love relationship between God's people and their "husband." Talk about the seductions in our culture that allure us away.
8. Now - back to Revelation 17-19. Babylon (the evil city, the prostitute, the beast's mistress) is going to get her judgment. All the poison she has served up to the world are going to result in her ultimate demise.
9. Read through the 29 items the people mourn over in 18:11-13. How many of these same "goods" are what drive our economies and our lives today? Would we be in mourning if they all went up in flames?
10. The great prostitute and the great city are one in the same; two images depicting the evil empire that stands in contrast to the city of God and the bride of Christ. All the empires of the world are sitting at her bar, drinking in her magic potions…and we are called to sit at this bar as well….but order a different drink! How's that going for you?
11. This text is sobering – the details of the 7th bowl of wrath – as God finally declares his vengeance on His enemies. She receives the just penalty for her sins. BUT, we also have a Babylonian postal code, and our challenge is to live in purity, and to keep our eyes on the new city we're waiting for. Talk about this battle. What are your greatest areas of struggle? Why do we so desperately need each other?

Taking It Home (Application)

12. What kind of lives should we live in light of the coming judgment? What urgency should this put in our living? Have we been more attracted by the colorful rich garments of the prostitute – or of the pure white gown of the bride? Is it time for some repentance! What about some celebration – that God is keeping us from the seduction of the world!?