

The World Will Be Judged

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 December 2021

Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 00] It's all good. Thank you, Lisa. I appreciate that. My name is Jesse. Those of you who don't know me, good morning to you. Those who are listening online, love you, miss you. Thanks for listening. And as you can see, it's December. It's Christmas time. I'm doing like my best, like in the season, in the spirit thing with my shirt here, and that's about as close it's going to get. I think some of the thing that's happening at the, thank you, some of the stuff that's happening at the youth party is they're doing an ugly Christmas sweater challenge too.

And yeah, I know that I've seen some of my boys' sweaters that they're bringing and it's, yeah, ugly is the word, definitely the word. But hopefully my shirt here doesn't qualify for that category.

But we are starting, if you're here, it's your first time, we're starting a new series. It's going through Advent. It's going to be a short series. And Advent, man, if you grew up in church, you may have heard about this. Maybe you haven't, if you didn't grow up in church, and that's okay.

Advent is actually a word that basically means coming. And throughout the church worldwide, through its history, it celebrated the season of Advent. And in fact, Advent marks the beginning of the church calendar, which the church calendar is those little movements that we go through that look forward to, anticipate, and then celebrate certain things that happen in the life of Jesus.

So Christmas obviously being a huge one, right? And then we have Holy Week, and then we have Easter, and then we have Ascension, and then there's Pentecost. And so this has been something that the church has followed and observed throughout its 2,000 plus years that it's been going on.

[1 : 39] And so the beginning of the church calendar, I mean, it kind of makes sense that it would start with Christmas. After all, without Christmas, like Christ didn't come, and the church wouldn't be what it is today at all. And so that's what I think for a lot of us, we grow up, and we think that, you know, Advent is the season of remembering and looking back to when Jesus came. Born in a manger, little bitty baby Jesus, right? Six pounds, seven ounce, golden fleece, you know, all that stuff, right?

But actually, you know what's funny, and I grew up thinking this too, it's funny, I didn't realize this, but historically, Advent isn't looking, necessarily looking back to Jesus, it's actually looking forward to a second coming. And so there's good reason for this, right? Like we sing a lot of songs, you think of some of the Christmas carols, the old hymns that we sing, it's like, O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining, it's the night of our dear Savior's birth, and then it goes on to say some other things, long lay the world in sin and error pining until he appeared, the soul felt its worth, the thrill of hope, a weary world rejoices, right? And so we think about these things, and we're like, yes, Christmas, it brought this new hope for the world, and Jesus came, and he lived this amazing life, and he died a death that we couldn't die, and then he rose from the grave, and that through him we could have new life and this promise of hope, but yet we still live in this broken world, we can't say that the world is no longer weary anymore, can we? No, there's a lot of exhaustion, there's a lot of weariness, there's a lot of sin, and a lot of brokenness, things aren't totally fixed, and so the church recognizes this, and we look back and we say, yes, Jesus came, but we also say, yes, he is coming again, the weary world one day will rejoice, because all of this is going to be undone. And so this season of Advent, we're going to look at a few things. This world as we know it will be judged, and will pass away in Jesus's return. The church will win, and all things will be made new. And today, we're going to come to terms with the fact that Jesus's second coming means the world will be judged. Now, we're going to be reading out of

Revelation 18. Revelation, not a typical Christmassy kind of passage, but just hang in there, hang in there, it's going to be good. And I just want to acknowledge the fact that, like, you know, when we think about, man, the world's going to be judged, judgment is not a popular subject. Like, our culture values being non-judgmental.

They have turned it into a virtue, right? Judge not, right? If you don't judge, you're a good person. Planet Fitness offers us a judgment-free zone in which we can work out in, right? But while we may think of judgment as a bad thing, the church and God, because of God and what he says in the Bible, it sees judgment as a good thing. And specifically, because in the Bible, God's judgment is simply calling things as they truly are, and then doling out justice, his justice, accordingly. In our supposedly judgment-free society, one needs to only go on to social media and see how judgmental we truly are in our judgment-free society, right? How consistent and how unjust our judgment is, right?

I mean, it's there to see. It's there to behold all over the place. But it's helpful to remember as we read our passage today that the judgment we're reading about isn't like our judgment. It's not man's judgment. It's talking about God's judgment. And if God is who he says he is, and he says he's loving, it says he's good, and he's righteous, he's all-knowing, then his judgments are better than ours and beyond our reproach and counsel. And with that in mind, let's read Revelation 18, verse 1. [5 : 34] After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. 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. 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. 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, for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 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 has mixed.

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. 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.

[7 : 00] 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. 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. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore. Cargo of gold and 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, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again. The merchants of these wares who gained wealth from her will stand far off in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud. Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls, for in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste. And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors, and all those who trade that on the sea stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, what city was like the great city? 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. Almost there. Rejoice over her, O heaven.

Rejoice over her, O heaven. And you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her. 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. 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, the sound of bread grinding, will be heard in you no more. 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. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth. This is God's word.

Merry Christmas. That's a little sobering, right? I'll admit, that is a rough passage, right? I mean, this is stuff that even us Christians feel uneasy about. You're just like, these are Sundays you're thinking either like, man, I'm glad I didn't invite my friend, or you're thinking like, of all the Sundays, why did I bring my friend today, right? But here's the thing, when we read something like this, yes, it is hard to understand what the heck is going on. I mean, it's like Babylon, and merchants, and millstones, and there's all kinds of this imagery that can be a bit confusing, and we get that.

But the first question we need to ask ourselves is this. Not that we don't ask God like, why are you so mean? Why do you seem very grumpy here? This is the question we need to ask.

God, you chose to put this in the Bible. Why did you put this in the Bible? Because it's in here. And he puts everything in his word for our sake. Now, Revelation is a part of what is called apocalyptic literature, right? And we often think of apocalypse as like the end times, doom and gloom, right? Zombie apocalypse, Mad Max, those kind of things, which after you read Revelation 18, you're like, yeah, it actually fits really well with that genre. But that word apocalypse simply means uncovering. It means to reveal. Think of it this way, like where Eugene Peterson had this brilliant little picture of what apocalypse means. Imagine a group of people walking into a house, and they smell this smell, and it smells amazing. But they're trying to figure out what's going on, and then they're drawn into the kitchen, and on the stove is this pot stewing. And so the smell is emanating from there.

[11 : 55] And so they're trying to figure out what is going on here. And so they go over to the stove, and they take the lid off. Apocalypse. They get to see what is happening. They get to see what is going on.

They get to see why they're experiencing what they are experiencing. And to understand Jesus's judgment here, it requires us to understand what Babylon is, and why it's being judged. Babylon will be destroyed because of its immorality, its greed, and its pride. That's what we are told about in these verses. And we can't just look and say like, okay, well, if Babylon's going to be destroyed, like how do I avoid being there, right? It's not a physical geographical place. It's not referring to the city in Iraq. That's not what's going on.

And actually, Babylon represents the spirit of the age, the age that we live in, the spirit that opposes God and stands against God and his righteousness and his justice and his holiness.

And here's the thing. Every nation throughout history has been caught up in Babylon's influence. Look at Revelation 18 verse 3. It says, not some nations. It says all nations.

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. This verse is saying to us that Babylon is not only the world we live in, it's also the world that lives in us, right? All nations have drunk her wine. Everybody, all peoples, all ethnicities, there isn't a righteous group of people out there born into this world that has not drunk the wine of Babylon. When we are born, we have drunk the wine of Babylon. We've slept with her.

[13 : 57] We are a part of her. We are united to her, and she is a part of us. That's what this verse is saying. Babylon is alive and well in our hearts from the time we're born. And she is the spirit of insatiable lust that has us clamoring for more and more and more, right? We just need more. We need that next experience. We're not satisfied with what we have. Every boundary that we can see must be broken.

We want to live without limits. Every desire that we have must be met. Babylon says to us, you have no borders. She's not some evil empire. She's not Russia or China or Europe or New York City or whatever other place you look at and be like, oh man, that's, you know, there's the mark of the beast right over there. She's alive and well, right here in the good old South too. Babylon's here. And God put this chapter in the Bible to reveal to us what is true, right? He's taking the lid off. What is? He's showing us what is real so that we don't get deceived and we don't put our faith in the wrong things. Remember, Revelation was written to the church and it was written for a few reasons. One, to give us hope. It was written to a church that was in persecution, deep, like hectic persecution, like both physically, but also it was, it was a church that was, that was facing down some heresies.

It was facing down being pulled away and deceived away from Christ. And so it's not only meant to give, the book of Revelation is not only meant to give us warning and hope, sorry, it's meant to give us warning as well. And I want us to think again about Revelation 18.3 and the categories it gives us of what Babylon has corrupted, right? We've drunk the wine of her sexual immorality. She's corrupted sex.

[15 : 45] The kings have joined with her and committed immorality with her. She's corrupted government. And then the power of luxurious living. She's corrupted our lifestyle, the way we choose to live.

Who hasn't been seduced into sexual immorality, whether that's adultery or porn or sex outside of marriage. Who hasn't been pulled at by the desire to live large, right? Who hasn't gotten, who hasn't gotten worked up over politics in their day. We all have. And it's not just that these things have been corrupted by Babylon. It's that our hearts have fallen in love with them. That's the big issue.

We want to live Babylon's way. And Jesus is not okay with that. Revelation 18 verses 4 and 5 says, this is Jesus. I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her. My people, come out of Babylon. He is talking to his church right here. Lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues. For her sins are heaped high as heaven and God has remembered her iniquities. Jesus isn't being mean here. Actually, he's doing this because he loves us. He loves us too much to let us get caught up in Babylon's judgment. Jesus calls us to leave Babylon and take no part in her sins. But this is the hard part. This is the hard part for the church because we can't physically leave Babylon. Like it's all around us. There's no place we can go. So is Jesus asking the impossible? I mean, some people have read these type of things and taken this way too literally and started like weird communes, you know, going off to like really distant places, checking out, like nobody can get in, just really isolating themselves. But that's not what Jesus is calling us to do here.

He said we are to be in the world, just not of the world. Meaning this is where we live, but it's not how we live. When Jesus calls us to come out of Babylon, it isn't just a warning to escape judgment. It's the call of the bridegroom who loves his bride. Remember, the bride-bridegroom theme is a major theme throughout Revelation. And this is the bridegroom calling his bride, hey, one day I'm coming for you. And when I show up, man, I don't want to find that you are making love to Babylon. I want to find you ready. See, sinning with Babylon is simply loving her, loving and loving her. And we are making anything more than Jesus. And when we do that, we do that by making any good thing into an idol. So sex can be an idol, money can be an idol, wealth, work, pleasure, people, politics. They can all become idols. It's simply taking good things, things that are meant to like make this life good and turning them into ultimate things. An idol is anything that we turn to in place of God to find joy or meaning or salvation or hope or purpose in our lives. But the Bible never describes the sin of idolatry like it's some like cute, great girl crush. Like, oh man, that's so sweet. Like God's not looking at that, right? Revelation 17.5 describes Babylon as the mother of prostitutes. She's the madam of the whorehouse is what it's saying here. That's how Revelation describes her. She wants you to cheat on Jesus with all the things she can offer. So she's saying to us, why be faithful to just love one guy when you can make love with this harem of pleasures that I have? I can give you all the things that you want.

[19 : 27] See, Babylon isn't just wanting us to live our best life now. She's after our hearts. She wants us to love anything more than Jesus. And she's more crafty and subtle than we think. Think about it.

How do you know when you love something? What are some of the signs when you love something? Well, it's where you kind of want to spend most of your time and energy and money, right? When I dated Haley, like there wasn't like a flock of other girls that I was like, well, let me figure out how to divvy up my time and energy and money across all the... Now, man, I was like forsaking all others. I was like, she's the one I wanted. She was beautiful. She had captivated my heart. So my time and my attention and my money and my energy, nothing was too great. Here's another test. Think about your response when someone attacks what you love. What do you do? I remember taking my son to school in, I think it was the first grade, Asher. He was a young guy and we had to shave his head because he had lice.

He gets it from time to time. So, you know, ladies, stay away from him. I think it's going to resolve around like 18, something like that. That's, uh, yeah. I love you, Asher. You know, trying to help you out, buddy. Trying to help you out.

So he comes in and it was like a break from school and he hadn't seen his friends in a while. And he walks in, he's got this shaved head. And of course, like no sun's been on it. So it's like glowing white, you know, that white scalp thing. And he walks in and, you know, I'm talking to the teacher as he drops and he goes in, his friends confront him. And I see them just starting to make fun of him. And it's just like, it just hits my dad's. I get emotional even thinking about it today. I don't know why it's so weird, but I'm just like those little, like those little, I don't know, six or seven year olds. Like I

was like, um, thank goodness that somebody is standing in front of me. Cause I might have like blacked out and done something like that disqualified me from like, I might've landed in prison. Basically. I was getting so mad watching this happen. You know, I was praying like, Lord, please make me a six year old so I could fix this. You know, I was going to go, I was about to go crazy, but that's what we do. When, when somebody attacks who you love, we just don't sit back and just like, Oh, it's no big deal. But look how people respond to that. I mean, when Trump lost the election, some people were so affected, they stormed the Capitol. They were willing to do some damage and hurt some people because of that. That's the spirit at Babylon at work. Politics is their lover. Now that's picking on Republicans in that example, but that's true for Democrats.

[22 : 11] And progressives and every other version of politics and whatever your political persuasion is as well. It can become our lover. Let's move away from politics. Let's talk about our lifestyle.

All of us are like, yes, please, Jess, let's talk about our lifestyle. Man, we pursue luxury and wealth. We overwork for it. We live on credit. We buy more than we need.

We eat more than we need. We buy and hoard. Like all that stuff can make us indestructible and happy. I mean, we have constantly like our home sizes in the last however many years have just gone bigger and bigger and bigger as the decades have gone on. And what do we do? We just fill it with more stuff.

Not necessarily more kids, just more stuff. Our double car garages are so full of stuff, we can't park our two and a half cars in them anymore. And then we get storage units because the house in the garage are too full. Revelation 18 calls this the power of luxurious living.

And we forget, man, all this stuff is all going to burn. We can't take it with us. Ecclesiastes, I mean, it's all vanity. It's like a puff of smoke. None of it is going to last. But still, man, it's hard for us. We can't imagine life without these things. We don't cry out and anticipate, man, come Lord Jesus. Come Lord Jesus. We can't wait for your second coming because that might mean I don't get to enjoy my boat or my hundred inch TV. I don't know how big they're getting these days, but my goodness, I walked into my dad's house a couple of years ago and it was like the size of his whole wall. I was like, wow, this is impressive. Instead of crying out for Jesus's return, we cry out. We cry with the idea that Babylon might end. Like Revelation 18, look what the merchants and kings responded. They all wept and they wailed as they looked at Babylon going up in smoke and they cried out. I don't know, but they had a lot to lose. They had a lot to lose. They got enriched off of her. They had benefited a lot off of her. Showed their heart. I'm going to pick on myself for a little bit. I'm young enough. I was in my early twenties when Lord of the Rings got released out in the theaters back in the early 2000s. And I remember thinking, oh Jesus, please don't come until I get to see all of this movies. The spirit of Babylon at work in my heart. Pleasure was my lover.

[24 : 42] Does Jesus's coming judgment on Babylon bum you out or fill your heart with joy and anticipation? Look at what he commands his church to do. In verse 20, rejoice over her, oh heaven. Rejoice over Babylon and you saints and apostles and prophets for God has given judgment for you against her.

See, the difference between all those who love Babylon and those who love Jesus was one weeps and wails over Babylon's destruction and the other rejoices. Now this may sound like, whoa, whoa, Jess, this sounds really harsh. This doesn't sound like the God we know of the Bible, but actually what's going on here, it's the love test. It's good for us to long for the destruction of Babylon. Jesus is telling us here, you get me or you get Babylon, but you can't have us both.

Sorry. And he warned us elsewhere in his gospels, it's impossible to have two lovers because you'll end up loving one and despising or rejecting the other. He says it's impossible to have two masters. It's impossible to submit to, to, to think you can, you know, straddle both sides of the fence, little bit of the world, little bit of Jesus, and we're going to be good to go. Now it doesn't work that way. He says, man, if you, if you try to do that, you know what, you're going to end up hating me and you're going to end up going all in for that one over there, all in for Babylon.

Here's an example of this love test, right? Let's, let's make it real practical. Let's say that I have a neighbor. He's always inviting me over. It's, he's got a big old house, a pool, a man cave. He's got ATVs and guns and boats and fishing and great food and a fridge stocked with IPAs. I mean, like the perfect friend, right? But he hates Haley. Can't stand her.

[26 : 35] And when I'm around him, he talks bad about her, puts her down. And he's always trying to get me to hook up with some chick that he knows. Taking all my time so I don't spend it with

Haley.

Now, if I really loved Haley, what should I do? It's no brainer, right? You end that relationship. I'm not interested in what he can give me or all his stuff because he hates what I love.

I love Haley more than any of those other things. Now that kind of makes sense to us and what's going to hear, but let's take it a step further like Jesus does in Revelation 18. What if this person hated Haley so much that he's always trying to harm her and kill her? My response should then be just a little bit stronger than, you know what? I don't think we should hang out anymore.

It's, it's a justified reason for me to want to see that guy experience judgment and be brought to justice. Why? Because I love Haley. Going Old Testament would be a good thing in that scenario, right? So you might be thinking, okay, Jess, what does this have to do with Babylon and you and me? And I would say everything. Revelation 18.6, up in heaven, they're saying, pay her back, pay Babylon back. Jesus, 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's mixed. So what are these deeds that they're talking about? What is she getting paid back for? Well, the answer is hinted at when it talks about the cup she mixed, which is actually referenced in the previous chapter in Revelation 17.6. It says, I saw the woman, Babylon, it's talking about Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints. The blood of the martyrs of Jesus. That's the cups. That's the cup she's mixed.

Jesus called out Babylon's many sins in chapter 18. And if you aren't convinced that those are worthy of his judgment, I hope this one does. It's not like Babylon had a bad day that she's ashamed of, man, you know what? Hey, just got a little angry, just had got a little upset, flew off the handle, killed some of your disciples. Jesus, so sorry, it's not going to happen again. That's not her. [28 : 59] It says she's getting drunk on that. She wants to do it, and she is not going to stop. It's like the opposite of that song, You Ain't Much Fun Since You've Been Drinking. It's like, you know what? You'd be a lot more fun if you stopped drinking. Jesus said the world, aka Babylon, is going to hate his disciples because they hated him first. They persecuted Jesus. They said, hey, they persecuted me. They're going to persecute you. That's what's going to happen. But here's the good news, because of Jesus' love, if someone messes with us, just like if anybody messes with the people we love, man, that love is going to make us angry in a righteous way. It makes us want vengeance, not for vengeance sake, but for love's sake. And if our imperfect love is like that, imagine what God's love for us would drive him to do. The measure of Jesus' anger and judgment is righteous and perfect because it is driven by his perfect love for us. That's also why we can look at this and be like, okay, cool. We can leave the judgment to him. We're not the ones doing it. We're actually leaving it to him. When it comes to judgment, Jesus knows better. He knows when to do it. He knows who to do it to. And he knows how much. And that frees us to long for the coming of Jesus and the destruction of Babylon without feeling bad about it. This revealing of Babylon doesn't show us a child and her terrible twos just needing a time out. Like, she's a monster. Like, she's a beast.

She's a serial killer. She's a hedonist. She's a power monger. I have a pastor friend who gets to minister to a lot of churches around the globe, many in very poor and persecuted areas where the church is persecuted, sorry. And he says the difference between those churches and churches in the affluent West is that, and those churches in those poor areas and where they're persecuted, they long for Jesus' return. That's like a reality they live with. They're like, please come, Lord. Life on earth isn't good for them. They are living in the reality of the ugly side of Babylon.

Right? It's easy for them to wrap their heads around Revelation 18 and say yes and amen. But for us in the West, I think it's a little bit harder because Babylon has hidden herself well behind all her luxuries. And I just want to say that's like, man, that's why it's good for us to get out of our context sometimes and get to the nations. Some of these poor nations where it's not okay to be a Christian sometimes. You can be persecuted for it. It really opens your eyes to something that we need our eyes open to. But Jesus is saying here, come out. Don't fall into her trap, man. The living in her luxuries, man, that's, I think that's where we in the Western church are so in danger of falling into her trap and her seductions. What would our lives, what would the church look like if we listened to Jesus and we came out of Babylon? It doesn't look like hiding away like we talked about. It doesn't mean like, oh shoot, you know what? Let's grab like 200 acres, you know, up in Montana somewhere and just create this like gated off commune to keep all the bad people out.

It's also not running outside on the street corners with a sign that says the world is ending, you're going to hell. While the church awaits Jesus's return, we do push back against the darkness of Babylon. That is something we can do. Yes, Babylon is going to be judged. It's going to be judged.

It's going to look like Mordor falling in Lord of the Rings. It's going to be awesome to behold. But until then, we don't simply resign ourselves to waiting it out. We are called to go rescue people out of Babylon.

Well, we all were Babylonians. Remember this. We were all citizens of Babylon before Jesus saved us. And we want as many people to come out of Babylon with us. That's why we don't check out. Instead, what we do is we move in. But not to enjoy Babylon, but man, to be subversive and to undermine her.

[33 : 20] With the kingdom of God, with the good news of the gospel and all that it offers. We live to show people that Jesus and his kingdom are better. So instead of living greedily, we live generously.

Instead of living to make our lives the best it is now, man, we live to give our lives away. Instead of hoarding money and power, it flows through us and flows out of us for the benefit of others and for the care and love of others. What does that look like practically? Let's get as practical as we can. Well, it looks like what the church has been doing. When the church has been rocking and we've been doing well throughout its history, man, what has it done? It's cared for the orphan. It's cared for the poor and the widow.

It's never stopped meeting together and caring for each other's needs. When we push back darkness, our money and our time and our energy flow to those that Jesus called the least of these. which goes really flies against, flies in the face of Babylon's virtues and values, right? Babylon, it's like, man, give your time and your energy to those that can benefit you, those that are in a position of power that can make your life better.

[34 : 29] Pushing back the darkness of Babylon means like, man, you know what? We could spend a lot less time on TikTok and news and politics and podcasts. We're hitting refresh every five seconds to see our stocks are doing.

It's seeking out the least of these. Spending more time doing that. That can be done in a ton of ways. Supporting your local soup kitchen. We have some great ones here, like RCS in New Bern. You could show up there, say, I want to volunteer. They will help you out. You can help the poor in our area. Hope is alive, man. We have this great relationship with an addiction ministry that helps addicts and gives them hope where they feel hopeless.

You can get involved with that. See how you can get involved with that. Man, I know somebody that, like, they moved here and they jumped in to a boys' and girls' club so they can mentor young kids. And oftentimes the kids at those places don't have two parents.

They may not even have a mother and father in their lives. But, man, we can jump in and we can fill that gap and we can move in and do that. It's even easier than that.

[35 : 38] Spending quality time. Just being present and checked in. Not on your phone. Not watching TV. Spending time with your family, with your own kids. Like discipling them. It's fostering.

It's adopting. People have done that. It's a beautiful thing. There's a ministry in our area called True Justice, I believe it's called. And it fights against the sex trade. Which you're like, that doesn't happen in our area.

Yeah, it happens in our area. There's a guy in our community group. He moved here, I think it was only like a few months ago.

They move into the area. And he goes right into volunteering to clean up trash in the city. Because he's like, I just want to make the city more beautiful. I was like, that is freaking awesome.

And you know what he got? Like, you know, while he was out doing that? Like a guy screamed and yelled at him for cleaning up his trash. Like, it's crazy, right? He got threatened to be shot for being on his property cleaning up his trash.

[36 : 35] But it's like simple things like that. Having neighbors over for dinner. All that kind of stuff. Like, man, when's the last time we thought about, like, you know, the neighbor around me.

Maybe they don't know Jesus. I wonder what it would look like just for them to get to do something, to create a bridge, to get into their life. To get to know them a little more. And maybe that will open up an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

In the hope of Jesus, that he's better. We don't do all this to earn God's love. We do it because we know God's love.

And we just want people to know that love, too. We want people to come out of Babylon with us. Is Babylon big and mighty? Yes, it is. But our job is to push back its darkness until Jesus comes and

takes her down.

Jesus is bigger. Jesus is stronger than Babylon. Babylon, he is winning. Despite what you may see around you, he is winning. And one day, he will fully win.

[37 : 37] The band come up. We're going to respond. I just want to have us respond this way. I want to remind you that Jesus is better. He's saying today, man, come out of Babylon.

I am so much better. Come out of Babylon. And that starts simply with putting your faith in him. And you know what? We spend the rest of our lives doing the same thing. We just keep re-upping our faith in him.

We keep saying yes to Jesus. That's what we keep doing. We live longing for his return. Longing for his return.

And just remember this too. Babylon has no power over those in Christ. Its power has been broken. We're going to pray, and then we're going to take communion together.

Father, I ask that you would do a work in our hearts. This is a sober reminder that when you come, you are coming to judge the earth.

[38 : 41] Father, we don't look at that and say, at least it's not me. I pray that that would increase our desire to see more people coming out of Babylon.

I pray it would make us, it would give us initiative, holy initiative, to desire to push back darkness in this world.

Lord, we know that one day you're going to fix these things and bring them all to an end. But until then, give us the grace to love people well.

Give us the grace to not get seduced by Babylon. We pray that in your name.

Amen. We're going to take communion. If you could stand with me. Hills, can you have me a communion cup? I didn't have one up here. Amen. Now, communion, it helps us two ways.

[39 : 57] It helps us to look back and it helps us to look forward. Jesus was born. Christmas reminds us of that. He was a man.

He was flesh. And when we take his body broken and his blood shed, it reminds us of those things. He came to rescue us from Babylon. He came to deliver us from its power.

And he was destroyed on the cross for our sake. And at that point, actually, to what he will do to Babylon one day. As he was destroyed, he is going to destroy.

But instead of being caught up in Jesus' judgment because of this, and we are caught up in grace, we are caught up in his salvation. And by his death, he brought us out.

His body broken for us. His blood shed. Let's take and eat both together now.